

Program Management Manual

(All Annexes Included)

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This document is in the Digital Library Archives and has been superseded.

This document was superseded by the [Program Management Policy](#).

For guidance, tools, and templates to enable country teams to meet and exceed the Program Management Minimum Standards, see the [Program Management Toolkit for Designing & Implementing High Quality Programs at Mercy Corps](#).

Program Management Manual

January 2012



Be the change

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BVA	Budget vs. Actuals
CD	Country Director
CDP	Capacity Development Plan
CoP	Chief of Party
CPI	Cost Performance Index
CV	Curriculum vitae
DM&E	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
DoP	Director of Programs
FAM	<i>Field Administration Manual</i>
FFM	<i>Field Finance Manual</i>
GAIT	Grant and Award Information Tracker
GIS	Geographic Information System
HF	High Frequency
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IT	Information Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCE	No Cost Extension
PALM	Procurement, Administrative and Logistical Management
PM	Program Manager
PMBOK	Project Management Body of Knowledge (Guide of the Project Management Institute)
PMD Pro	Project Management for Development Professionals (guidebook and certification by PM4NGOs)
PMI	Project Management Institute
PMO	Program or Project Management Office
PMP	Project Management Professional (PMI certification) OR Program Management Plan (similar to an indicator plan)
POps	Program Operations
PRINCE	Project Management in Controlled Environments
PWP	Program Work Plan
HQ	Headquarters
RACI matrix	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted & Informed
RFA	Request for Applications
RPD	Regional Program Director
SoW	Scope of Work
SPO	Senior Program Officer
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TSU	Technical Support Unit
VHF	Very High Frequency
WBS	Work Breakdown Structure



Be the change

Mercy Corps exists to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. Mercy Corps helps people turn the crises they confront into the opportunities they deserve. Driven by local needs, our programs provide communities in the world's toughest places with the tools and support they need to transform their own lives.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Contextual Information

1.1. Introduction

Why Do We Need the Program Management Manual?

The risks of poor program performance – reduced impact, fraud, reputational damage, lost opportunity – are great. Good program management saves time and increases impact and accountability. It can free country teams from costly mid-implementation “fixes”; spare us from reinventing the wheel; ease mid-program staff transitions; and liberate time to pursue ideas, innovate and build strategic partnerships. Through our programs we are held accountable to communities, donors and the world.

Programs are at the heart of Mercy Corps' strategy of community-led, market-driven activities in pursuit of our Vision for Change. This manual and supportive toolkit on Mercy Corps' Digital Library are designed to assist our field and headquarters teams and partners to effectively and efficiently manage programs from the Program Identification and Design Phase through the End of Program Transitions.

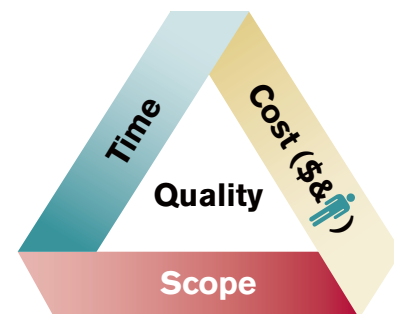
Mercy Corps' core business consists of designing and implementing programs. The Mercy Corps Strategic Roadmap and regional and country strategies link Mercy Corps programs to our Mission to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities across the globe. To meet strategic objectives, Mercy Corps pursues contextually appropriate programs, recognizing that sound program design and management are the basic building blocks of successful performance. Mercy Corps programs adhere to principles of accountability, participation and peaceful change, as we believe these principles form the basis for healthy interactions between stakeholders. We commit to accountability for what we implement (program design) and how we implement (program management), through transparent, inclusive, disciplined and ethical program management. Good program management is about delivery and quality – it is about bridging the gap between strategy and results and ensuring that carefully designed targets are achieved within the time and budget allocated. Effective program management is an imperative.

The Status of the Program Management Manual within Mercy Corps' Policy Framework

This manual constitutes a policy, similar to the *Field Finance Manual*, *Field Procurement Manual*, or *Field Administration Manual*. **The contents of the Minimum Standards Checklist described in Chapter 2 are required for any program over \$250,000.** These requirements are supplemented by certain program management certification requirements, as described in section 1.2. The policy applies to any new programs (starting in Fiscal Year 2013, from 1 July 2012) that meet the aforementioned criteria. This manual provides resources and instruction for meeting the Minimum Standards as well as additional recommendations for successful program management.

This manual is a supplementary document to *A Guide to the Project Management for Development Professionals (PMD Pro)* which clearly explains the definitions, processes and requirements.¹ This manual is designed as a “how to” guide for program management processes in the Mercy Corps context.

The manual is backed by the Program Management Toolkit, which is available on Mercy Corps' digital library. The Program Management Toolkit provides templates, forms, tip sheets, examples and other tools for the processes and Minimum Standards included within this manual. In some cases, chapters are supplemented by templates, forms, or tools, which are also included within the Toolkit and hyperlinked in footnotes. The Toolkit will continue to be developed with new resources as the *Program Management Manual* is adopted throughout the agency and should be consulted regularly for the most up to date resources to support program management at Mercy Corps.



¹ Other widely referenced standards are PMI's PMBOK: The Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge¹ and PRINCE2: Project Management in Controlled Environments¹.

What is PMD Pro and How Does it Relate to This Manual?

The *Guide to PMD Pro* provides an introductory, platform-independent exploration of the principles and terminology of project management within the context of the international development sector. The Guidebook was developed through contributions of a variety of international development organizations and with the support of the Project Management Institute (PMI).² It is accompanied by a professional certification series.

Mercy Corps has adopted the PM4NGOs *A Guide to the PMD Pro*³ and certifications as the foundation for Program Management at Mercy Corps. This *Mercy Corps Program Management Manual* adapts the guidance within PMD Pro to the Mercy Corps environment and is designed to be used in concert with *A Guide to the PMD Pro*.

1.2. Certification Requirements for Mercy Corps Program Management Personnel

The following certification requirements apply to Mercy Corps team members in positions considered critical for program management success:

Team member	Certification Requirements	Timing
Any team member holding a <u>Project Manager, Program Manager, Chief of Party(CoP) or senior operations position, as well as Country Directors.</u>	PMD Pro1	Within six months of assuming the first relevant position with Mercy Corps ⁴
Any team member working as a Project Manager, Program Manager, Program Director, Head of Office, Chief of Party for a program exceeding US\$1 million in value; any Director of Programs	PMI's "PMP" (Project Management Professional) certification -or- PRINCE2's Practitioner Certification; PMD Pro2 and PMD Pro3 certifications ⁵ , which first require PMI or PRINCE2 certifications, are optional	Within 18 months of assuming the first relevant position within Mercy Corps ⁶

2 PMI is cross-disciplinary not-for-profit membership association for the project management profession which has developed globally-recognized standards and credentials for project management.

3 Please refer to <http://ngolearning.org/pm4ngos/pages/PMD%20Pro1%20Prep.aspx> for details. PMD Pro consists of a guidebook and professional certifications, which aim to optimize international NGO project investments by enabling project managers to be reflective, professional practitioners who learn, operate and adapt effectively in complex project environments.

4 Examples: 1) A former Project Officer is appointed for the first time as a Project Manager within Mercy Corps, managing a new 2 year, \$250,000 nutrition project – she has six months from the day of her appointment as Project Manager to complete the PMDPro1 certification; 2) a new team member, who has several years of program management experience with other agencies but is not certified, joins Mercy Corps as a Program Manager of an 18-month, \$750,000 market development project – he has six months from the day he joins Mercy Corps to complete the PMDPro1 certification.

5 At the release of this manual, PMD Pro certification is available from PM4NGOs at level one which tests knowledge and comprehension of the project management concepts. Level two will test the candidate's ability to analyze, apply and adapt these concepts and is anticipated for release during the first quarter of 2012. Level 3 is expected to follow.

6 Examples: 1) An experienced, but uncertified, team member is appointed as a Program Manager for a 3-year, \$15 million food security project – she has eighteen months to obtain either a PMP certification from Project Management Institute (PMI) or a PRINCE2 Practitioner certification from PRINCE2 (PRojects IN Controlled Environments). Thereafter, it is her decision whether or not to pursue a PMDPro2 and/ or PMDPro3 certification, which requires PMP or PRINCE2 qualifications as a pre-requisite. 2) A first-time Director of Programs is appointed for a country portfolio with an annual value of \$4 million – he has eighteen months to obtain either PMP or a PRINCE2 Practitioner certification, after which time pursuit of a PMDPro2 or PMDPro3 certification is optional.

1.3. What is Program Management?

What is Program Management?

“Program Management” refers to the process of applying skills, knowledge and tools to identify requirements, address needs, incorporate the concerns of stakeholders, and balance the competing demands of time, cost, and scope (sometimes called the “triple constraint”) to achieve incremental benefits through the integrated management of multiple projects, each of which is designed to produce a unique product, service, or result.

Program management is different from “business processes,” which refer to ongoing operations, such as accounting, fleet management, recruiting, office management, procurement, representation and similar. Good “business processes” should be applied to operations, often in support of a portfolio of strategy and programs, while good “program management” should be applied to programs. These are distinct, but highly complementary practices.

Why Does this Manual Use “Program” Instead of “Project”?

Many of the processes described in this manual apply to “projects” as described in various “project management” literature and global standards.⁷ However, Mercy Corps – and other International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) – most often refer to our initiatives as “programs,” and we use the title “Program Manager” for the managers of these initiatives. This manual primarily uses the term “program,” as individual grants or cost centers at Mercy Corps most often encompass a “program” or collection of projects managed together to bring about incremental benefits. The Minimum Standards presented in [Chapter 2](#) are required at the “program” level. The processes outlined in this manual and in PMD Pro may be applied at both the program level and to the component projects within.

	Global Standard Terminology	Mercy Corps Context
Project	A project is defined as a “temporary endeavor undertaken to produce a unique product, service, or result.” “Project management” refers to the practice of planning, organizing, and managing resources to bring about the delivery of goals, outcomes, and objectives.	The unique products, services, or results that collectively make up a program. At the discretion of the Project Management Office, the policies in this manual may also apply to individual projects within the program.
Program	A program consists of multiple projects that are managed together to bring about incremental benefits. “Program management” processes are quite similar to project management processes, but program management also concerns itself with the integration of more than one project into a cohesive effort that achieves “incremental benefits.”	One or more awards or interventions with a common purpose, to which a single manager is assigned. The policies in this manual fundamentally apply to the level at which a single Program Manager is assigned; in the Mercy Corps context, this person might be called a “Project Manager,” “Program Manager,” “Program Director,” or “Chief of Party.”
Portfolio	A portfolio is a collection of projects, programs, and other work (business processes, or operations) that are grouped together to achieve strategic objectives.	A Mercy Corps country portfolio or headquarters business unit.
Project or Program Management Office (PMO)	A “PMO,” or Project or Program Management Office, is the office that manages shared resources between different projects and programs, identifies methodologies and standards, coaches and mentors Project and Program Managers, manages compliance, and facilitates communication.	The “Director of Programs” function and his/ her team, or equivalent (“Head of Department”). In some cases different titles, such as “Program Coordinator,” are used. At times, the Country Director, Country Representative or equivalent may also fill this function.

⁷ The term “global standards” is used throughout this manual as a catch-all phrase to encompass Project Management Institute (PMI) tools, including but not limited to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK); Project Management in Controlled Environments (PRINCE2) tools; and, Project Management for Development Professionals (PMD Pro) tools.

Examples of Portfolios, Programs and Projects at Mercy Corps are depicted in the table below:

	Field Example	Notes
Portfolio	Mercy Corps Ethiopia	
Program	Revitalizing Agricultural/ Pastoral Incomes and New Markets (RAIN)	Processes in this manual are recommended; processes on Minimum Standards Checklist are required
Manager Assigned	Chief of Party (CoP)	CoP is ultimately accountable for ensuring that the policy requirements are fulfilled
Project(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Training of Selected Farmers in High Impact Crop Production Technology – Collective farmer marketing of crops – Linking farmers to financial services 	At the discretion of the CoP and PMO, the processes in this manual may be applied to these projects, or may apply to the program level only
PMO	Director of Programs and his/ her team, Ethiopia	

1.4. The Program Manager's Role and Generally-Accepted Knowledge/ Competency Areas

The Program Manager is the person assigned by Mercy Corps to achieve program objectives. The Guide to PMD Pro describes the competencies required of good Program Managers in the development sector. These are referenced here so that users of this manual are familiar with the requirements, but for details please refer to PMD Pro, Section 1: Chapter 1.

The required Program Manager competencies include:

- Technical
- Leadership/ Inter-personal
- Personal/ Self-management
- International Development-specific (that is, specific to the sector, context, and cross-cutting themes in question)

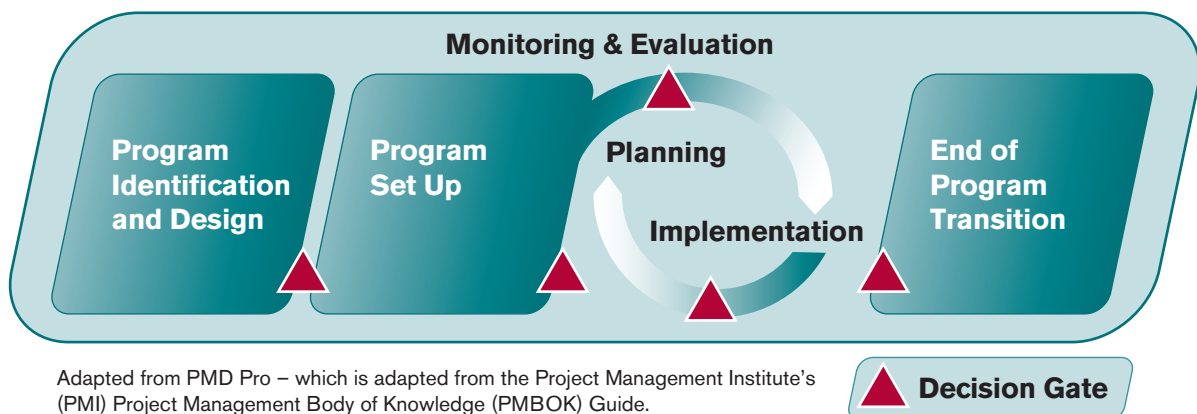
Mercy Corps Program Managers are expected to continuously strive for excellence in all four of the above competency areas.

Chapter 2: The Program Lifecycle and Minimum Standards Checklist

Many NGOs have developed models that outline their interpretation of the lifecycle of their programs. Mercy Corps' model is based on the model used by PMD Pro. Mercy Corps has slightly adapted the PMD Pro model by combining two phases (Program Set Up and Program Planning) into one phase (Program Set Up and Planning) and defining Monitoring and Evaluation as a process spanning all phases (see [Chapter 6](#)). At Mercy Corps, and throughout this manual, we present the four distinct phases and the M&E Process. Use of this terminology provides a common reference point within Mercy Corps when discussing programs with management, operations and finance staff, and within the program team.

Every program has a definite start date and end date, yet the specific activities and deliverables that take place in between vary from one program to the next. The Program Lifecycle serves as a framework that helps to:⁸

- Define the phases that connect the program from beginning to end
- Identify the processes that teams must implement as they move through the phases of the program lifecycle
- Illustrate how the program management lifecycle can be used to model the management of programs
- Model how programs work within an environment of constraints, where changes to any one constraint will result in consequential changes to the other parameters



2.1. Definition of Each Phase within Mercy Corps:

Program phases are convenient divisions within a program lifecycle where primary work focus changes. This often involves different partners or stakeholders and different skill sets. Persons responsible for management of the program may be different at different phases. Minimum Standards within Mercy Corps require the completion of certain tasks during each phase as per the Minimum Standards Checklist. The Minimum Standards for each phase also appear at the beginning of each phase's chapter within this manual. Deliverables and processes required for each phase are described in detail in the relevant chapters of this manual.

- **Program Identification and Design:** During this phase, teams and stakeholders work together to identify program ideas; collect assessment data; analyze the assessment data; develop the program logic; create proposals or preliminary program scope statements with summary budgets and high level program plans.
- **Program Set Up and Planning:** During this phase, the Program Work Plan is prepared. The Program Work Plan is a map of the program, identifying the detailed activities, budget and the schedule required to deliver the direct program results.

⁸ A Guide to PMD Pro.

- **Program Implementation:** During this phase, the program is launched and implementation takes place. Program launch involves setting up the basic program files, team structure and communicating the work plan. Implementation involves managing, adjusting and tracking activities, communications, quality, risk, organizational capacity and coordinating the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Process:** Throughout a program, it is monitored and evaluated as necessary. Processes conducted as part of M&E compare program performance to the original proposal objectives and indicators, as well as to the Program Work Plan. Variances found against plans allow for adjustment during any phase of the lifecycle of the program.
- **End-of-Program Transition:** During this phase, the end of program transition strategy as articulated in the Program Work Plan is updated and executed, while “final 90 days” and other close-out and transitional processes are carried out.

2.2. Key Aspects of the Program Management Lifecycle at Mercy Corps

- Mercy Corps encourages a balanced approach towards each phase. Though not equal in their duration nor resource requirements, each phase is important and adequate time and resources should be allocated for every phase.
- Phases are not always linear: phases overlap, are at times integrated, and are often iterative. Each program is different. It is often common to start two phases simultaneously. For example implementation of a previously planned community assessment may be initiated as the detailed planning starts on a separate aspect of the program.
- As depicted in the diagram, the ‘planning’ components of Program Set Up and Planning phase are in a continuous, iterative loop with the Program Implementation phase. This is what is sometimes referred to as “progressive elaboration” in project and program management standards.
- The processes in all other phases are continually reinforced and assessed through monitoring & evaluation. Information gathered via monitoring should be applied to inform planning and future decision-making.



2.3. Minimum Standards Checklist

These Minimum Standards represent a requirement for programs with budgets of \$250,000 and over. Standards for programs with budgets less than \$250,000 are at the discretion of the portfolio manager. The Minimum Standards must be applied at the program level (the point at which a single Program Manager is assigned), but can also be applied at the project level within larger programs.

Mercy Corps' *Program Management Manual* is intended to aid program teams to be responsive to changes in their context and proactive in ensuring programs remain on track and relevant. While the Minimum Standards outlined below must be honored, some of the required standards will be met in different ways for programs of varying size, urgency and complexity. Program Managers and their supervisors should use sound judgment to determine how each minimum standard will be met within a particular program. Challenging environments demand flexibility, ingenuity and patience in addition to sound program designs, carefully developed program work-plans, and quality execution.

This list of Minimum Standards corresponds to the chapters of this manual. More information for each of these standards can be found within the corresponding chapter. These are necessary steps within Mercy Corps' program management framework.

Minimum Standards Checklist

Program Identification and Design (Chapter 3)

- A.** Written assessment or problem analysis exists, based on primary or secondary data (note: this can be contained in the proposal documentation, or can be a separate assessment document)
- B.** A list of external stakeholders participating in initial consultations is available
- C.** Program Logical Framework exists
- D.** Lead designer has checked for lessons learned from similar programs globally
- E.** Program proposal with summary budget (sometimes called preliminary program scope statement) exists

Set Up and Planning (Chapter 4)

- A.** Program File is created
- B.** Program Work Plan (PWP), exists, with the following minimum contents:
 - C.** Key program parameters, coming from preliminary program documents
 - D.** Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)
 - E.** Program Schedule
 - F.** Coded Program Budget
 - G.** End-of-Program Transition Plan
- H.** Technical, Cross-cutting Theme, and Sub-grant/ Partnership Planning is conducted. Supply Chain and Contracting, Personnel, Operations and Security Planning is conducted
- I.** Program Organizational Chart exists

Implementation (Chapter 5)

- A.** Program Work Plan (PWP) is approved and regularly updated
- B.** Program Kick-Off Meeting is conducted, and minutes are available
- C.** Program Team Coordination Meetings take place at least once per quarter with documented minutes
- D.** Program progress reports (narrative and financial) exist and include progress toward indicator targets
- E.** Scheduled and ad hoc reports and updates are communicated to stakeholders
- F.** Actual Program Schedule (within PWP) is updated against the Baseline Schedule by Program Manager and submitted to supervisor on a monthly basis
- G.** Descriptions of deliverables exist, and quality assurance checks are carried out at least twice per program year
- H.** Budget vs. Actual reports for the Program Budget are prepared monthly, and projections against the Program Budget are prepared quarterly
- I.** Program Team receives copies of, and is oriented on: Proposal & Logical Framework, M&E plan, Program Work Plan, Kick-Off Meeting minutes and relevant parts of the Program Budget and Grant Agreement. Program Team is oriented on administration and finance procedures (FAM, FFM, FPM), and roles & responsibilities for contractors and partners
- J.** Program Team is recruited; roles, responsibilities, and required skills have been articulated; Position Descriptions exist; Training Needs Assessment is carried out
- K.** Program Team member performance is assessed and documented by Program Manager within three months of program start, and annually thereafter

Monitoring & Evaluation (Chapter 6)

- A.** Indicator Plan exists (Planning Phase)
- B.** Key program M&E events (at a minimum, baseline, evaluation, and routine monitoring) have been carried out, and reports of these events exist (Implementation Phase)
- C.** Basic M&E data management system exists (Implementation Phase)
- D.** Final Evaluation report exists (Implementation Phase)

End-of-Program Transition (Chapter 7)

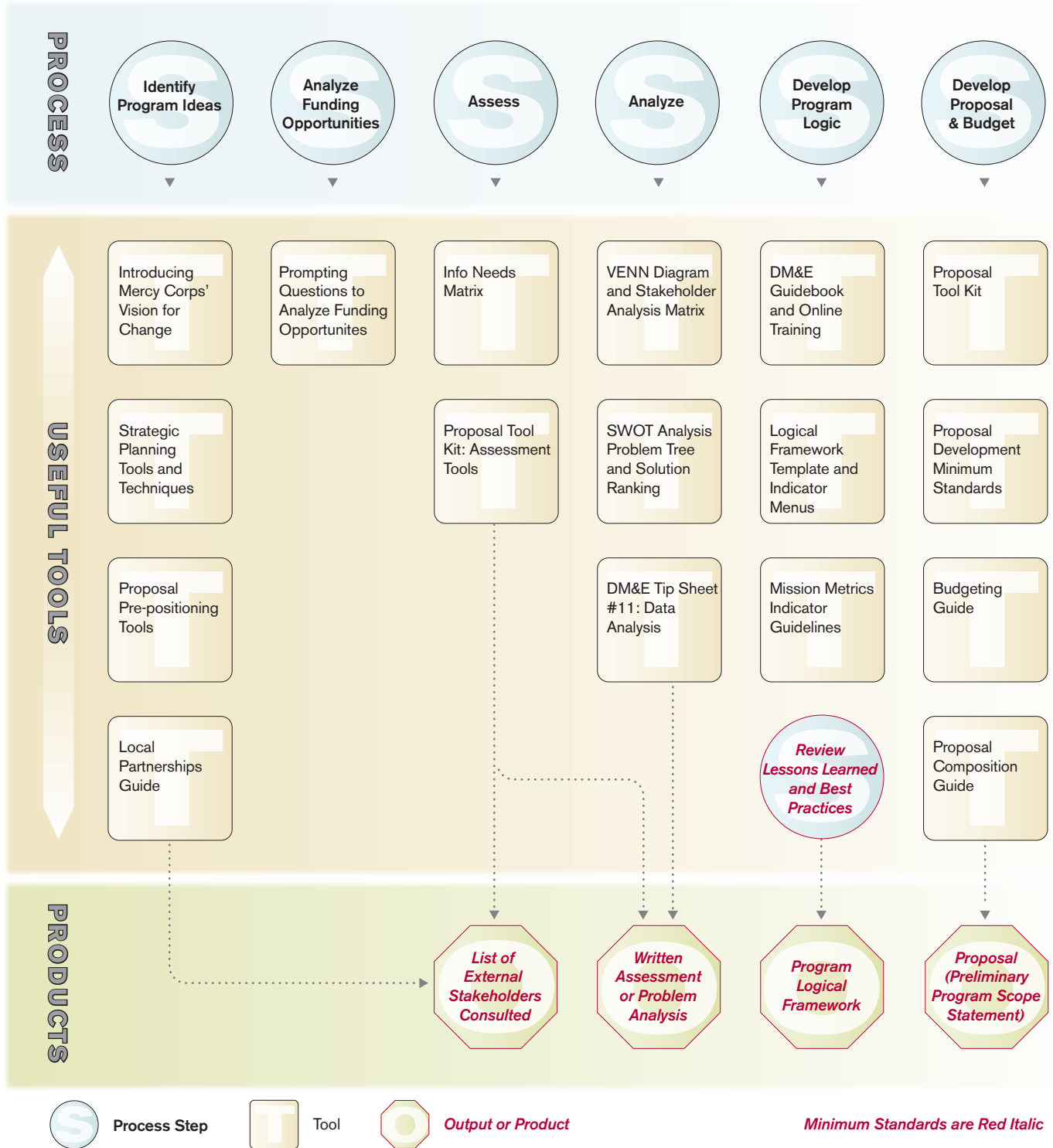
- A.** Written End-of-Program Transition Plan exists
- B.** "Final 90 day" meeting has taken place, and minutes exist
- C.** Contract/ sub-grantee status reviewed and finalization plans specified
- D.** Deliverables to be transitioned to external stakeholders have been handed over, and handover documentation exists
- E.** Lessons learned have been documented, and have been sent to the Senior Program Officer (SPO) and Technical Support Unit (TSU)
- F.** End-of-Program Transition has been clearly communicated to the Program Team, beneficiaries, host government counterparts, and partners
- G.** Program File is complete
- H.** Final report is completed and donor close-out requirements are met

2.4 Mercy Corps Internal Resources

Mercy Corps has field-tested tools and policies that can be useful resources during each phase of the Program Lifecycle and with the required Minimum Standards. Many such tools are referred to throughout this manual and have been compiled into the Program Management Tool Kit which is available within Mercy Corps' Digital Library. In addition to the in-county teams, the Program Management, Technical Support Unit, Program Operations (POps), Design, Monitoring and Evaluation, Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness, Strategic Response and Global Emergencies (SRGE), Operations and Procurement, Administrative and Logistical Management (PALM) teams within Mercy Corps' global structure are valuable human resources that field teams can and should consult with for additional guidance.

Chapter 3: The Program Identification and Design Phase

Program Identification and Design



Minimum Standards for the Program Identification and Design Phase:

Written assessment or problem analysis exists, based on primary or secondary data (note: this can be contained in the proposal documentation, or can be a separate assessment document) (see [3.4](#))

A list of external stakeholders participating in initial consultations is available (see [3.4](#))

Program logical framework exists (see [3.6](#))

Lead designer has checked for best practices and lessons learned from similar programs globally (see [3.6](#))

Program proposal with summary budget (sometimes called preliminary program scope statement) exists (see [3.7](#))

About This Chapter

Program Identification and Design is the first phase of the Program Life Cycle in which Mercy Corps teams and stakeholders work together. This chapter describes the key steps of Program Identification and Design that can help to ensure good programmatic results. These are described below, divided into the following categories: [3.1](#) Introduction to New Program Development at Mercy Corps; [3.2](#) Identification of Program Ideas; [3.3](#) Funding Opportunity Analysis; [3.4](#) Assessment; [3.5](#) Analysis; [3.6](#) Program Logic; and, [3.7](#) Proposal and Budget Development.

3.1 Introduction to New Program Development at Mercy Corps

New programs can be developed through existing teams discovering new needs or a response to a Request for Application or Call for Proposals. The process steps of Program Identification and Design that lead to a proposal or preliminary program scope statement⁹ are iterative, and in many cases overlapping. The order depicted in the [Chapter 3](#) diagram represents one of many sequences for how the process flows, which will vary based on a program's identification and design needs. The level of time and effort required to complete each phase of the process will also vary depending on the size and complexity of the program being identified and designed. An important aspect of each phase described below is consultation with stakeholders, which is critical to ensuring the suitability and viability of program ideas and the support of those to be engaged and affected by the program's outcomes.

Resources available

This manual introduces a range of tools to support simple to more complex forms of Program Identification and Design, noting the Minimum Standards for the Program Identification and Design phase. Mercy Corps' New Initiatives team has created a Proposal Tool Kit¹⁰, including Mercy Corps' Proposal Development Minimum Standards¹¹, Proposal Pre-Positioning Overview and Tools¹² and the Proposal Composition Guide¹³, which are available on the Digital Library and include details and tools for many of the processes within Program Identification and Design, and in particular the Proposal and Budget Development process.

⁹ A preliminary program scope statement details a program's activities in a manner similar to a basic proposal and is required in instances in which a program proposal has not been developed.

¹⁰ Proposal Tool Kit: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=p&p=ptk>

¹¹ Proposal Development Minimum Standards: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=proposal+development+minimum+standards>

¹² Proposal Pre-Positioning Overview and Tools: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Pre-positioning+tool+kit>

¹³ Proposal Composition Guide: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=proposal+composition+guide>

3.2 Identification of Program Ideas

Needs Identification & Alignment

The process of identifying a program idea begins with the identification of needs and opportunities. In the case of a country in which Mercy Corps has existing programs this is often done through periodic reviews of the existing country or regional portfolio and strategic plan. This process often reveals areas of need outside the scope of the existing portfolio or opportunities for complementary work that can contribute to related objectives. Any newly identified needs and opportunities should be reviewed and further formalized when carrying out a country's annual planning process or other complementary strategic planning processes. In the case of a prospective country in which Mercy Corps is considering developing new programs, an initial assessment visit to gather information about needs, existing activities and capacities, donor interests, etc. is important for informing program idea identification.

Input and participation from a variety of stakeholders – such as community leaders, local organizations, donors and government officials - helps to determine new program ideas that are well targeted, viable and have community support. Clearly demonstrating input and active participation of a variety of stakeholders, including beneficiary communities and local partners in particular, can also be critical criteria of donors in the assessment of proposals. *Local Partnerships: A Guide for Partnering with Civil Society, Business, and Government Groups* is a helpful tool for identifying and building promising partnerships, beginning with identification of program ideas and continuing through all phases of program management. Tools that can be useful for analyzing stakeholder information include a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, a Venn diagram and a Stakeholder Analysis. Examples of these tools can be found in the Overview of Strategic Planning Tools and Techniques¹⁴ document, page 10 of the *DM&E Guidebook*¹⁵, page 17 of *A Guide to the PMD Pro* and on the Digital Library. Such tools are useful in narrowing focus to where there is an intersection between existing assets in the target community, unmet needs, donor interests and Mercy Corps' unique capabilities, and then prioritizing such intersections so that new program ideas are strategic and focused in areas having the greatest chances of success. The table below highlights things that are important to consider when looking for intersecting points of opportunity.

Points of Alignment					
Agency	Mission Statement (see Mission Metrics)	Vision for Change	Strategic Roadmap	Relevant Regional Strategy	
Country Specific	Country Program Goal and Objectives)	Existing Geographic Concentrations	Existing In-country Core Competencies ¹⁶	Programming Principles ¹⁷	Local capacity & Partnership Opportunities

In addition, the Proposal Pre-Positioning Overview and Tools can help in preparing to pursue funding as program ideas are identified. Positioning strategies promote the agency's relevant strengths, diminish perceived weaknesses, and assist in assembling a strong future proposal.

14 Overview of Strategic Planning Tools and Techniques: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?e=d-000-00---0agency--00-0-0-0prompt-10---4-----0-1--1-en-9999---20-mchome---00031-011-0-OutfZz-8-00&a=d&c=agency&cl=CL1.1.2.4.3.3&d=HASHc1783b3c70e610d82db3cf>

15 *DM&E Guidebook*: https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DM-E_FINAL_Guidebook_3final.pdf

16 Core competencies are sectors in which a country program has programming experience and expertise

17 Principles are the fundamental ways a country program has committed to working, for example using technology, in partnership with the private sector, using advocacy, etc.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are persons or organizations whether in the public, private or civil sector, whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by Mercy Corps' decisions, actions and ensuing results. Stakeholders can be both internal and external to Mercy Corps. Examples of stakeholders include: Mercy Corps team members, community groups, households, donors, the private sector, host country government, media, partners, and colleague agencies. In a program context, stakeholders are persons or organizations that are actively involved in the program and whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by the performance or completion of the program. Stakeholders may have very different interests, capacity and influence based on gender and power relationships in the community¹⁸. Each program phase and/or sub-project may include unique stakeholders, and it is the responsibility of the Program Manager and PMO to identify the stakeholders at each phase, communicate their anticipated level of participation and/or responsibility and manage expectations¹⁹.

3.3 Funding Opportunity Analysis

Responding to a Request for Applications (RFA)/Call for Proposals

The issuance of a call for proposals from a donor can trigger new program idea identification, or the refinement of an existing program idea. Having advance knowledge of such funding opportunities and acting on it (see guidance offered in the Proposal Pre-positioning Overview and Tools), greatly improves the quality and competitiveness of a program design and proposal. In anticipation of, or upon release of a call for proposals, a funding opportunity should immediately be evaluated to determine if it is an appropriate mechanism for realizing an identified program idea and that the necessary resources for doing so are available. The Prompting Questions to Analyze Funding Opportunities²⁰ can help in carrying out this evaluation. Should a decision be made to pursue the funding opportunity, the subsequent processes of program design should be carried out.

Decision Gates

The discovery and development of a new program is time and resource intensive. Due to a variety of constraints not all new ideas will be developed into new programs. In order to track and determine feasibility and pursuit of a new opportunity, a program idea will typically go through a set of decision gates.

Mercy Corps Decision Gates for New Program Development

The decision to pursue a new program opportunity or not almost always comes down to a balancing of resources required and the probability for success of one opportunity, versus competing agency priorities and other funding or programming opportunities. While developing a new program does not always include developing a proposal for a donor, developing new program opportunities always requires human and financial resources, so resource allocation decisions must be made. To the extent that a country team (Portfolio Management) possesses capacity to pursue a new program opportunity without significant external support, the decision to pursue or not resides within the management structure of the country team, inclusive of the Regional Program Director (RPD). To ensure the country implementation team has a viable strategy for meeting necessary requirements, programs with co-financing requirements and sub-contracts must be approved prior to proposal submission by the Senior Vice President of Programs and the Chief Financial Officer, and in the case of Scotland office supported programs, the Deputy Executive Director.

In instances - such as large and highly competitive donor solicitations - where a Mercy Corps response requires several additional dedicated proposal developers (i.e. TSU) to be competitive, additional buy-in and support from headquarters management is necessary. Requests for additional support should be communicated through the Regional Program Director, keeping the Program Operations team informed. Final decisions about how such additional resources are assigned ultimately will involve the RPD, the Senior Vice President for Programs and the Vice President for Strategic Development. The Program Operations team often helps with facilitating this decision

¹⁸ Mercy Corps' "Gender Policy Procedures" is under development as of the release of this manual and is expected to be available on Mercy Corps' Digital Library in early 2012.

¹⁹ PMBOK, page 23, Chapter 2.

²⁰ Prompting Questions to Analyze Funding Opportunities: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=prompting>

making and also provides other key support to proposal development, which may include facilitating headquarters' technical and cost proposal reviews, writing proposal sections or leading proposal development.

Identification of External Stakeholders Holding Authority over Go/ No-go Decisions

While in most cases the go/ no-go decision resides primarily within Mercy Corps, there are instances where external stakeholders or factors can dictate whether or not Mercy Corps is able to effectively fulfill the role defined under a programming opportunity. Factors potentially impacting our ability to pursue a funding opportunity include:

- Political restrictions or limitations on NGOs working in the target region / country.
- Mercy Corps' credibility and reputation with local government or beneficiary communities.
- Mercy Corps' ability to forge vital win-win partnerships with other key local and international organizations operating in the same programmatic space.
- Requirements for co-financing or match funding for a program and the need for commitments from external sources prior to proposal submission.

In every instance, efforts should be made early to map out areas where support from external actors is required to avoid investment of significant agency resources in vain.

3.4 Assessment

Effective program designs are preceded by the identification of unmet needs, understanding of root causes leading to the identified problems, and identification of the causal relationships that lead to these problems. The proposal lead must also be aware of capacities and lessons learned from similar programming. Needs analysis should be carried out in consultation with local stakeholders and include an identification of what assets exist within the target community and what relevant unique capabilities Mercy Corps can offer, while also factoring in donor interests. Development of a new program idea typically follows an analytical process of assessment (data collection), program analysis (problem and objectives analysis), and ends in program logic (logframe). Proper analysis enables a team to understand and communicate the high-level constraints and requirements of the new program. **The existence of a written assessment or problem analysis, based on primary or secondary data is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.** The next few sections describe this process.

An assessment should not be confused with a baseline survey. An assessment is broad reaching, gathering data on needs from a variety of stakeholders during the Program Identification and Design phase. For further details on baseline surveys, which pertain to the Monitoring and Evaluation Process, see [Chapter 6](#).

What and Why

An assessment to inform the development of a new program can vary in its scope depending on what information is already on hand, the amount of time available for gathering information, and the availability of resources for conducting assessment activities.

As noted in the *A Guide to the PMD Pro*²¹, an assessment should gather a broad range of information about needs that either confirms the suitability of the initial project idea or points to adjustments that should be made. This information will be considered in the following analysis phase of developing a project idea. Upon completion of the assessment, a summary of information gathered must be on record and may be incorporated into the proposal document.

Scope of Work and Selection of Methodology

A Scope of Work (SoW) for an assessment should state its purpose and what questions it aims to answer. The Info Needs Matrix (Sample can be found in the Program Management Tool Kit on the Digital Library) can be used to identify information requirements, and Annex 5 of the Psychosocial Needs Assessment done in Gaza in 2010²² contains an example of a detailed SoW, appropriate for a more complex assessment. A SoW should identify key

²¹ Section 2: Chapter 1, page 14

²² Psychosocial Needs Assessment done in Gaza in 2010: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=all&h=dt&q=gaza+psychosocial+assessment>

stakeholders to consult with and methods to be used in gathering data. If responding to a donor solicitation, the RFA or Call for Proposals should also be consulted when identifying the type of information needed. For unsolicited proposals, brainstorming around the initial idea can generate a list of data to collect that will better define the needs, constraints and opportunities. Most assessments use a variety of methods which include secondary research, key informant interviews, surveys and focus group discussions.

The specific information to be gathered will vary from and depend on the targeted sector(s). PMD Pro references several tools that can be used for assessments²³ as does the Mercy Corps Assessment Tools²⁴ section of the Digital Library, which contains a variety of survey tool examples for various sectors. The relevant TSU technical team(s) can provide useful input and recommendations for the most useful tools in designing the assessment.

Secondary Research

Secondary or desk research can produce important data detailing context and needs and can be done with relatively few resources. It should be the starting point of data collection, with primary research being pursued in areas lacking in documented research or needing greater depth of information. When conducting secondary research, a matrix such as the Literature Review²⁵ example in the Proposal Pre-positioning Overview and Tools can help in organizing information gathered for easy reference during the analysis and proposal development phases.

Engagement of Target Community and Partners

Target community and local private, public and/or civil society partners' input into an assessment verifies an accurate understanding of local needs, constraints and opportunities. Involving these stakeholders also provides an opportunity to empower local actors and create ownership of the program's benefits. It is important to consider gender and power dynamics in communities when using participatory methods. For example, in order to ensure full community participation, separate male/female information gathering sessions may be required. There are a variety of assessment tools that facilitate the target community's participation in the process such as focus group discussions, household surveys and key informant interviews. Local partners can often facilitate access to marginalized stakeholders when access is difficult and help to expand assessment efforts. Efforts should be made to ensure that methods used adequately solicit input from groups frequently marginalized in communities, such as youth, women, persons with disabilities, etc. ***These stakeholder consultations must be documented to facilitate future contact by the Program Implementation team as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.*** One format for documenting this information is to utilize the Assessment Contacts Documentation Tool²⁶.

3.5 Program Analysis

Tools for Analysis

There are a variety of tools that can be used to understand, synthesize and analyze data gathered through assessments and desk research. In addition to the analysis tools referenced in PMD Pro, Mercy Corps' ASSETS Guidebook²⁷ contains additional tools as well as further instructions for applying some of the PMD Pro referenced tools, including: the Problem Tree, Solution Ranking, SWOT Analysis and the Venn Diagram. The DM&E Tip Sheet #11: Data Analysis²⁸, is a helpful resource for analyzing primary data. As noted in PMD Pro, selecting the right tool will depend on the objective of the analysis, the type of data collected, and the person(s) carrying out the analysis.

²³ Section 2: Chapter 1, page 16

²⁴ Mercy Corps Assessment Tools: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=d-000-00---0progdev-00-0-0--0prompt-10---4-----0-11--1-en-9999---20-mchome---00031-011-0-OutfZz-8-00&a=d&gc=2&cl=CL1.2.1#CL1.2.1>

²⁵ Proposal Pre-positioning Overview and Tools: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Pre-positioning+tool+kit>

²⁶ Assessment Contacts Documentation Tool: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=all&h=dt&q=Assessment+contacts>

²⁷ ASSETS Guidebook: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=progdev&h=dt&q=assets+guidebook>

²⁸ DM&E Tip Sheet #11: Data Analysis: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=dme+tip+11+data>

Categories of Analysis

Ultimately the analysis process should lead to a **goal statement** for the project that in some way addresses the root causes of the problem. In determining the goal statement, a variety of factors should be considered that inform the project's scope. These include:

<p>Stakeholders: PMD Pro summarizes the key points to consider when identifying stakeholders; analyzing their interests and mapping stakeholder influence. A mapping tool, such as the Venn Diagram can help in understanding various interests and their relevance to addressing the identified problem. Don't forget to disaggregate quantitative data by gender and age during the assessment and analysis processes.</p>	<p>Existing Priorities: Local stakeholder priorities will impact the feasibility of various interventions. Important to consider are those needs deemed most critical by the target community, as well as what the local government or other relevant agencies intend to focus on. Similarly, Mercy Corps' global priorities, regional and country strategies and organizational capacities should be factored into the analysis, along with key Mercy Corps design factors such as the facilitation of public, private, and civic sector partnerships, and the promotion of community-led, market-driven approaches.</p>	<p>Proposal Parameters: When responding to a Request for Applications or Call for Proposals there are often areas of focus specified by the donor that must be taken into account and which will often dictate the types of underlying issues the project must address.</p>	<p>Feasibility: In looking at root causes of problems and considering ways to address them it is important to keep in mind what is feasible, financially and technically, as well as consider the potential for sustainability and the environmental impact of approaches being considered.</p>
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3.6 Program Logic

Upon gathering assessment information and analyzing the data, the development of the program logic leading to a Logical Framework (logframe) will follow. This is a principle tool that provides a framework from which to start planning a program (outputs, schedule, and budget). **The existence of a program Logical Framework is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

Developing a Logical Framework, or Logframe

As noted in PMD Pro, the formats used for logframes vary but have a common intent in serving as the basis for reflecting all the major steps in the life of a project or program and ensuring that each is logically connected. Mercy Corps has a standard logframe template²⁹, that can be used when no other format is specified by a donor. However, alternative logframe formats can be used as per the donor requirements. Other donor templates³⁰ are posted on the Digital Library.

Identify Program Goal, Objectives, Outputs, Activities and Indicators³¹

The Fundamentals of Project Design chapter of the *Design Monitoring & Evaluation Guidebook*³² details the process, with illustrative examples, for taking a goal-oriented approach to designing a program. It begins (following the assessment work described above) with determining the desired impact of the program, which addresses the root cause(s) of an identified problem. This leads to the program's Goal. Next, the key changes required in the target population in order to achieve that impact are identified, which become the program's Objectives. Subsequently,

SMART Objectives

To ensure its clear when an objective is successfully achieved it is important for all objectives to be SMART:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**elevant
- T**ime-bound

²⁹ Mercy Corps standard logframe template: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Standard+Mercy+Logical+Framework+Template>

³⁰ Logframe templates: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=dme+example+tool+logframe>

³¹ Mercy Corps' process for developing a logframe, our standard format and some terminology varies from what is described in PMD Pro. While not entirely incompatible, it is recommended that Mercy Corps employees generally follow the process presented in Mercy Corps' Design, Monitoring & Evaluation Guidebook for consistency across the organization.

³² *Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Guidebook*: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=DME+guidebook>

the program designer will need to determine what goods and services are needed to bring about these changes, these are the program Outputs. Finally, the actual Activities to be carried out in order to produce the required outputs need to be determined. Once these aspects of the program are clear, Indicators that measure the program's success must be selected. A Design Checklist in the *DM&E Guidebook* is a good reference, reflecting best practices for preparing a program logframe

Efforts should be made at this phase to select indicators that can be aligned with Mission Metrics³³, Mercy Corps' system to measure macro-level results, to track progress against our mission.

As an intermediary step, particularly should the initial formulation of a program design precede the release of a solicited Request for Applications, and as the details for determining specific Activities and Outputs are still being determined, a Results Framework can help in starting to form the Project Logic³⁴.

Consult with Relevant TSU and Program Support Teams (sector specialist, DM&E, New Initiatives, etc.)

The proposal lead must also ensure that they consult relevant Mercy Corps resources and team members (Digital Library, TSU, Pops) to ascertain any lessons learned from similar past Mercy Corps programming. **Reviewing lessons learned and best practices is a Minimum Standard in designing program logic**, because it prevents a situation in which Mercy Corps team members 'reinvent the wheel' unnecessarily. The relevant sector specialists in the TSU and DM&E team can offer useful resources and guidance as a logframe is developed. It is often useful to work with the designated Pops Program Officer to identify appropriate sector specialists that can support this review. Sector specialists are aware of research done in the sector to identify best practices as well as lessons learned from other projects implemented by Mercy Corps. This can lead to useful information regarding approaches that have and have not proven successful. They are also aware of standard indicators for a sector that can lead to the selection of appropriate indicators for the program. In addition, the DM&E team's review of the logframe can provide feedback on the logic of the design and the appropriateness of the identified indicators.

To benefit from this support it is recommended that those developing a program communicate the anticipated technical needs with their HQ program officer(s) who can contact relevant members of the TSU early in the design phase, requesting that they set aside time to help in the development and/or review of a logframe and, subsequently the proposal.

3.7 Proposal and Budget Development

When a Call for Proposal is being responded to, much of the work described above may already be done or may need to occur in addition to responding to the solicitation. This next section describes the specifics of developing the proposal.

Making a Proposal or Scope Statement Development Plan

The amount of effort involved in the preparation of a proposal will vary depending on its size and the requirements of a donor. Typically the process involves a number of tasks that need to be accomplished in a short amount of time by a team of individuals contributing different parts to the overall final documents. In order for this to be done successfully the process needs to be well organized from the start. The following are key steps towards getting organized, spelled out in Mercy Corps' Proposal Development Minimum Standards³⁵, and which have tools on the Digital Library to help in carrying them out. The size of the effort required will dictate how complex the planning process needs to be, but all proposal development should start out with at least a simple plan:

- Assemble a proposal development team and assign roles and responsibilities. The Proposal Team: Roles and Responsibilities³⁶ document lists common functions that the Proposal Team Leader, HQ Program Officer and Country Director (or other relevant Portfolio Manager) should review upon deciding to prepare a proposal, determine which are of relevance and assign responsible parties.

33 Mission Metrics Indicator Guidelines: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=all&h=dt&q=mission+metrics+guidelines>

34 Alternative Mercy Corps Logical Framework Format with Results Framework template: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Excel+Logframe+Format>

35 Proposal Development Minimum Standards: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=proposal+development+minimum+standards>

36 Proposal Team: Roles and Responsibilities: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Proposal+Team+Roles>

- Prepare a proposal development plan³⁷ that indicates an overall calendar and all the tasks necessary for completing the proposal, due dates and the person(s) responsible – this is usually done by the Proposal Team Leader and will often include activities described above (assessment, analysis, etc).
- Have a kick-off call with the team to review the proposal development plan, specific tasks and work assignments. A sample agenda for such a call can be found in the Proposal Tool Kit of the Digital Library³⁸.

Proposal Development Team Members

Proposal and/or program scope statement development must involve a team comprised of the right mix of individuals familiar with the existing country program, local needs and capacities, relevant technical area(s), finance and donor requirements. Who these individuals are and how many are involved will vary from one proposal to another depending on its size, its strategic importance, the complexity of the program being designed and the resources available at a given time.

At the start, a proposal team leader will be identified. This is often a Program Manager, Director of Programs (head of PMO) or Country Director (head of Portfolio Management). In the case of large proposals a New Initiatives or other TSU team member may lead the proposal. The team leader in most cases will be assisted by someone with expertise in the sector(s) on which the program will focus. This could be a member of the field team and/or may involve someone from the relevant Technical Support Unit. More complex proposals will require additional staff to assist with coordination of the proposal preparation, collection of data, negotiation of partnerships, etc. In countries with existing Mercy Corps programs the Finance Manager will lead in developing the budget. In addition, a team of reviewers should be identified which typically includes the Country Director, Country Operations Manager, Regional Program Director, a HQ Program Officer, a relevant member of the TSU, and the HQ Regional Finance Officer. It may include other HQ support teams, such as DM&E or PALM for specific sections of the proposal.

Partners

Early on, the Proposal Development Team should determine whether any partnerships are required in order to successfully implement the program activities, as well as be competitive in our application for funding to implement the desired program. *Local Partnerships: A Guide for Partnering with Civil Society, Business, and Government Groups* provides useful guidance and tools for establishing, fostering and managing partnerships. The Guide also contains Mercy Corps' Principles of Partnership, which are essential for structuring and framing collaborative relationships. The negotiation of the role of each partner can be time consuming which should be taken into account and built into the proposal development work plan. A teaming agreement template³⁹ and sample letters of commitment that can be useful during the negotiation process, alongside the Principles of Partnership, can be found in the Proposal Tool Kit. Teaming Agreements should be prepared with all partners to assure a clear and common understanding of roles and responsibilities of participating organizations. They should reflect the exact understanding between the organizations to avoid confusion and delays at program start up. They are also a helpful reference as sub-agreements are drafted during the set-up and planning phase.

Key Personnel Identification

Frequently RFAs or Calls for Proposals require the identification of one to five “key personnel” within a proposal. In these cases it is critical to begin recruitment immediately as the steps require, which include: 1) drafting a position description; 2) advertising; 3) screening of applicants; 4) interviewing of top candidates; and 5) negotiation of a job offer, followed by 6) formatting of CVs and drafting of relevant sections of the proposal narrative, which require a month or more to complete. In the Recruitment section of the Proposal Tool Kit are tips⁴⁰ and templates⁴¹ for drafting

37 Proposal Work Plan Template: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Proposal+Work+Plan+Template>

38 Proposal Kick Off Call Sample Agenda: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Proposal+Kick-Off+Call+Agenda>

39 Proposal Teaming Agreement Template: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=Teaming+Agreement>

40 Position Description Instructions for HQ and Expat Staff: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=position+Description+instructions>

41 Position Description Templates: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=position+Description+template>

Position Descriptions and Letters of Commitment for staff⁴² and contractors⁴³ as well as a sample CV format for USAID⁴⁴. Where there is no requirement to specify key personnel such a level of effort is not necessary, but it can be useful to give consideration to a program's staffing needs as it is designed to inform the subsequent planning phase.

Narrative Draft

Mercy Corps' Proposal Composition Guide⁴⁵ describes ten tips for writing a clear, concise and convincing proposal. The drafting of the narrative should begin with a well-designed program that is responsive to the donor's solicitation and the assessed need. It is important, therefore, that at the start the writer has 1) a program logframe that has been reviewed by the proposal team; and 2) a copy of the RFA or Call for Proposals which often contains very clear instructions for length, format, outline, etc. These documents provide the framework for the narrative. Help and examples can be found in the *Technical Proposal Writing and Reviewing* and the *Sector Information Packets* sections of the Proposal Tool Kit

Budget Draft

As with the narrative, the instructions in the RFA or Call for Proposals should be closely consulted when preparing the budget. Guidance for developing a program budget can be found in the Budgeting Guide Presentation⁴⁶. A Mercy Corps standard budget template⁴⁷ should be used for the initial draft and, if required, then modified to conform to a donor's budget template. The budget is typically developed by the Finance Manager for the country, in consultation with other members of the program design team. Although further, more detailed budget planning work is required in the Set Up and Planning phase, the creation of a budget is always recommended in the Program Identification and Design phase as well, even in rare cases when it is not required by a donor.

All costs associated with the program should be included in the budget. Where not required, including match⁴⁸ or co-financing in the budget is discouraged due to the added administrative burden. Those proposals that require retention and/or co-financing must submit an Expression of Interest⁴⁹ for approval by the Regional Program Director, the Senior Vice President for Programs in Portland and, in the case of Scotland office supported grants, the Deputy Executive Director in Edinburgh.

The budget should be cross-checked with the proposal narrative to ensure the documents align, as well as be reviewed by the HQ Regional Finance Officer. The Digital Library has a Budget Review Check-list⁵⁰ to help in reviewing the budget.

42 Exclusive Letter of Commitment for Key Staff: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=letter+of+commitment+staff>

43 Consultant Letter of Understanding (Proposal Stage): <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=letter+of+commitment+contractor>

44 USAID CV Example: https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=USAID.*cv

45 Proposal Composition Guide: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=proposal+composition+guide>

46 The Budgeting Guide Presentation is under development at the release of this manual and will be included in the Program Management Tool Kit on the Digital Library.

47 Proposal Budget Templates: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=proposal+budget+template>

48 What You Need To Know About Match: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=what+match>

49 Expression of Interest from Mercy Corps Country Offices to Apply for Grants with Retention and/or Co-financing Requirements: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=retention+co-financing+requirements>

50 Budget Review Checklist: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=agency&h=dt&t=0&q=Budget+checklist>

Proposal Production and Submission

Developing, writing, reviewing and finalizing a proposal takes significant effort and time. All of this must be allowed for when taking on the development of a new proposal. Other tools available are:

- Proposal Review Tips⁵¹ offers suggestions for making feedback practical and useful
- Appendix A of the Proposal Composition Guide offers a Sample Proposal Outline
- Proposal and Donor Guidelines section of the Proposal Tool Kit

A proposal or preliminary program scope statement with a summary budget is a Minimum Standard of Program Management at Mercy Corps.

Final Steps

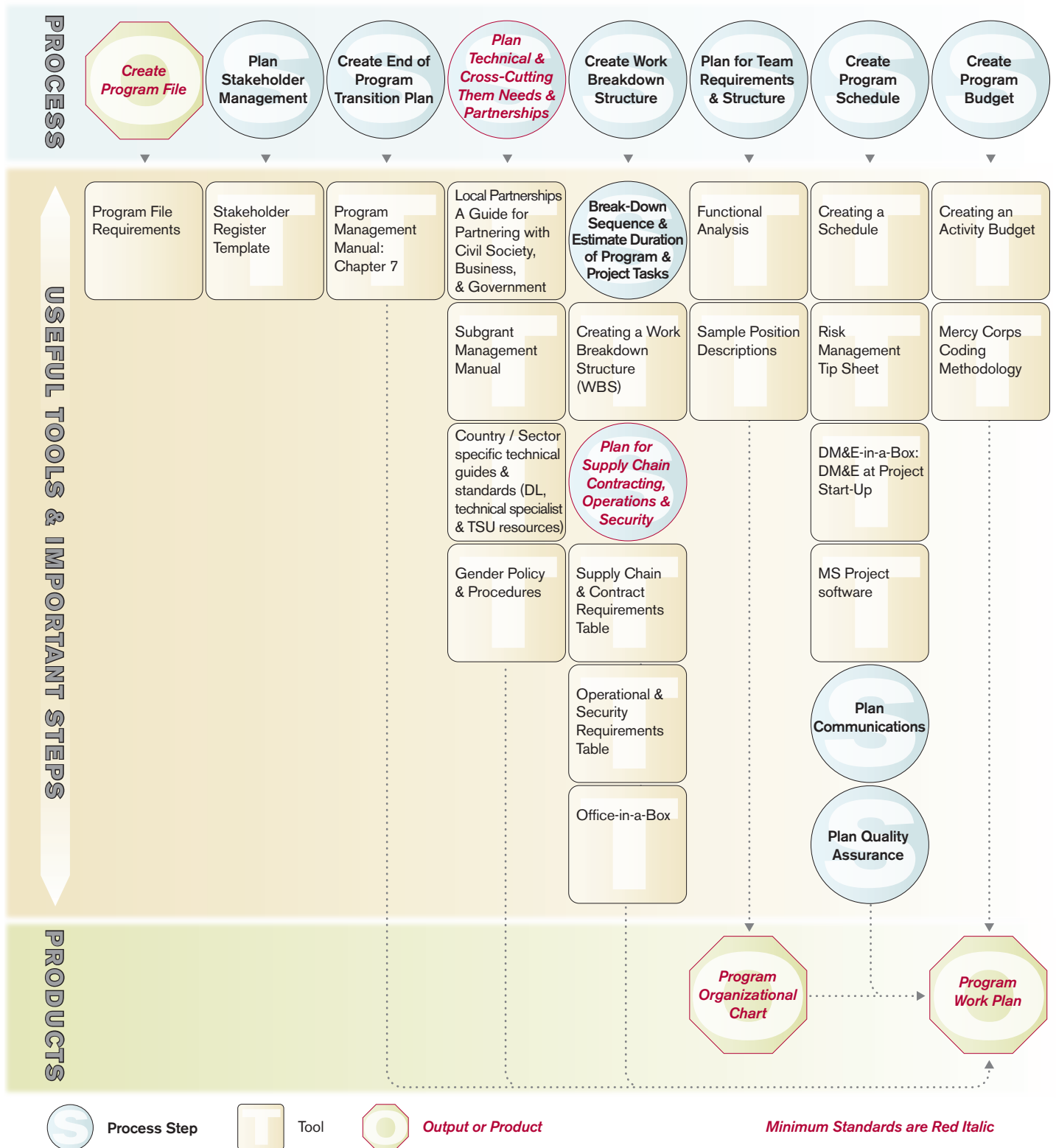
Following the submission of a proposal, it is important that a few final steps are completed, including: 1) ensuring an HQ program officer makes a Grant and Award Information Tracker (GAIT)⁵² entry that summarizes the application made; and 2) submitting the proposal to the Digital Library. In addition, an electronic file should be kept containing all assessment data gathered, including contact information for interviewees, organizations, etc. (such as the Assessment Contacts Documentation Spreadsheet) and handover notes with key details about decisions made during the design process that would be of relevance to the team implementing the program, should the proposal be successful. These activities should be included in the proposal development work plan, specifying who the responsible party is for carrying out these final important steps.

⁵¹ Tips for Proposal Reviewers: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=tips+proposal+reviewers>

⁵² Grant & Award Information Tracker (GAIT) is a web application developed by Mercy Corps to track real-time program and financial information on grants and other awards. The system is also used for gathering information for Past Performance Reports as well as generating a variety of financial and program reports. The information inside GAIT is updated through the joint efforts of both the HQ Finance and HQ Program departments.

Chapter 4: The Set Up and Planning Phase

Program Set up Planning



Minimum Standards for the Set Up and Planning Phase:

- Program File is created (see [4.1](#))
- Program Work Plan (PWP) exists, with the following minimum contents (see [4.3](#)):
 - Key program parameters, coming from preliminary program documents
 - Work Breakdown Structure (see [4.6](#))
 - Program Schedule (see [4.8](#))
 - Coded Program Budget (see [4.9](#))
 - End of Program Transition Plan (see [4.4](#))
- Technical, Cross-cutting Theme, and Sub-grant/ Partnership Planning is conducted (see [4.5](#))
- Supply Chain and Contracting, Personnel, Operations & Security, and Planning is conducted (see [4.6](#))
- Program Organizational Chart exists (see [4.7](#))

Monitoring and Evaluation Minimum Standards for the Set Up and Planning Phase:

- Indicator Plan exists (see [6.3](#))

About This Chapter

The Set Up and Planning phase follows the identification & design phase. It is the phase in which the designed program is planned, prior to implementation. The program management steps in the Set Up and Planning phase are not necessarily linear – some of them will take place iteratively within the Program Implementation phase adding more planning detail and reacting to Monitoring and Evaluation feedback. It is expected that planning starts in the Set Up and Planning phase and is regularly conducted throughout Program Implementation in response to new information, risks, opportunities, assumptions and constraints, and while initial activities will be planned in great detail at the start of a program, later activities will be progressively elaborated during implementation.

This chapter describes the key program management steps during the Set Up and Planning phase. These are described below: [4.1](#)) Program File; [4.2](#)) Stakeholder Management Plan; [4.3](#)) Program Work Plan; [4.4](#)) End of Program Transition Plan; [4.5](#)) Technical Requirements and Partnerships Plan; [4.6](#)) Work Breakdown Structure; [4.7](#)) Team Requirements and Structure; [4.8](#)) Program Schedule; [4.9](#)) Program Budget. Please note that initial start-up activities such as recruitment and Kick-Off Meetings take place in the Program Implementation phase (see [Chapter 5](#)), and for that reason are not covered here.

4.1. Program File

The Set Up and Planning phase is entered into after a program that has been identified and designed has been approved for funding and is ready to move ahead. At this point, when it is confirmed that the program will move ahead, a Program File should be created – please refer to Mercy Corps' Program Document Retention Policy⁵³. The initial documents in this file will be the proposal, budget, assessment documentation, and stakeholder lists prepared during the Set Up and Planning phase (see [Chapter 3](#) for details). During the Set Up and Planning phase, this file will be populated by key planning documents as they are created. **Note that creation of this Program File is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

It is likely that the Program File will also contain additional information such as success stories, the Stakeholder Register (see [Chapter 4](#) and [5](#)), additional Monitoring and Evaluation documents (see [Chapter 6](#)), a Risk Matrix (see [Chapter 4](#)), ad hoc communication to stakeholders (see [Chapter 5](#)), and communications materials (see [Chapter 5](#)). Ultimately, the items to be added to the Program File over and above the minimum requirements can be decided by the PMO and/ or Portfolio Management with guidance from the HQ Program Officer.

It is imperative that the Program File in the field and the Grant File kept at HQ by the finance team over-lap perfectly on the agreement, modifications, change letters, log-frame, budget, and progress reports. Additionally, please refer to the program document retention policy for guidance on which documents need to be retained at HQ in addition to in the field. Also refer to Chapter 17 of the *Field Finance Manual: Record Keeping and Archiving*⁵⁴, The *Field Procurement Manual*⁵⁵ and the Human Resources Management section of the *Field Administration Manual*⁵⁶,

⁵³ The Program Document Retention Policy is under development as of the release of this manual.

⁵⁴ *Field Finance Manual* Section 17 – Record Keeping: https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/Section_17_-_Record_Keeping.pdf

⁵⁵ *Field Procurement Manual*: https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/field_procurement_manual_2006.pdf

⁵⁶ *Field Administration Manual*: https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/Field_Administration_Manual.pdf

particularly regarding responsibilities for retention of original documents. If a document outlined in the Program File pertains to an original kept by finance, the requirement is to include a copy of the document in the Program File.

The following list outlines the minimum records required to be retained in hard copy files. Where possible, the soft copy file structure and content should mirror the official program hard copy file. This list is not all inclusive and items not listed should be referred to your HQ Program Officer for guidance.

Program File Contents Checklist	
Identification & Design⁵⁷	
See Annex 10 for a printable checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Assessments (see Minimum Standards checklist) a. Written assessment or problem analysis (can be included in proposal document or can be a separate assessment document)
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. External stakeholders list a. List of external stakeholders (with contact information) participating in initial consultations b. Community selection written rationale c. Partner identification written rationale
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Proposal or Preliminary Scope Statement a. Final submission approved by donor b. Logical Framework c. Summary Budget
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Documentation of the review of lessons learned and best practices
Set Up And Planning	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Agreements a. Final signed program agreement with donor b. Agreements of Understanding – communities/partners/government (Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), letters of support, etc.) c. Modifications and amendments to program agreement d. Official communications with donors, including requests (NCE, key personnel, waivers, etc.) and approvals
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Work Plan (see Minimum Standards checklist) a. Key program parameters, coming from preliminary program documents b. Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) c. Program Schedule d. Coded program budget e. End of Program transition plan

⁵⁷ The documents within Identification & Design should be drafted during the Identification and Design Phase. As a Program Manager will likely not have been assigned at this stage, the documents should be retained by the HQ Program Officer. When a program is approved, the HQ Program Officer will send an electronic package with the Identification and Design documents to the program team in the field.

Implementation

- 1. Meeting Minutes
 - a. Kick-Off Meeting minutes
 - b. Program Team Coordination Meeting Minutes (quarterly)
 - c. External stakeholder meeting minutes
- 2. Reporting
 - a. Program reports submitted to donor (interim, annual and final)
 - b. Internal Program Progress reports
 - i. Means of verification such as beneficiary lists, attendance sheets, survey data, etc.
 - c. Updates to Program Work Plan
 - d. Issues Log (recommended)
 - e. Risk Register (recommended)
- 3. Sub-grants (see sub-grant manual and Grant File for more info)
 - a. Approved proposal and coded budget
 - b. Sub-grant agreement
 - c. Memorandum of Understanding
 - d. Program reports (interim, annual and final)
- 4. Deliverables⁵⁸
 - a. Descriptions of Deliverables (Documentation of planning)
 - b. Verification of execution / proof of assistance received
 - c. Reports of quality assurance checks
- 5. Human Resources
 - a. Organizational chart (Personnel and Job Files are retained with HR)
 - b. Consultants
 - i. Consultant agreement
 - ii. Scope of Work
 - iii. Final deliverables / output
 - c. Training Needs Assessment

Monitoring & Evaluation

- 1. Indicator Plan / Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)
 - a. Deviations formally documented and plan updated
- 2. M&E Event Reports (baseline, endline, and routine monitoring)
- 3. Evaluation Report (mid-term and final)
- 4. M&E Data Management System Reports
- 5. M&E Data Sources disaggregated by sex and age
 - a. Surveys
 - b. Beneficiary lists – activity, location, names, etc
 - c. Attendance sheets – trainings, meetings, etc
 - d. Pre- and post- tests from trainings
 - e. Routine monitoring reports (projects & sub-grants)

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⁵⁸ Requirements will vary based on intervention type. Please refer to the Program Document Retention Policy and Procedures for detailed information on requirements.

End-of-Program Transition

- 1. End-of-Program Transition Plan (written & approved)
 - a. Proof of communication to internal team members as well as external stakeholders
 - b. Sub-grant end of program closure documentation and formal acceptance of work performed
- 2. “Final 90 Day” Meeting Minutes
- 3. Handover report to external stakeholders
 - a. Handover of deliverables documented (includes infrastructure)
- 4. Lessons learned written document

Please note, all correspondence with donors, communities, partners, government, both formal and informal, should be printed and filed under the relevant topic folder. Each numbered category should include a folder for correspondence. For questions or guidance on this, please contact your HQ Program Officer.

4.2. Stakeholder Management Plan

A program is successful largely when the needs of the stakeholders have been met. During the Program Identification and Design phase, potential stakeholders were identified, consulted, and listed (please refer to [Chapter 3](#) for details). During the Set Up and Planning phase, this list of stakeholders should be reviewed, and any additional internal or external stakeholders should be added. For larger or more complex programs, the Program Manager should consider developing a Stakeholder Register (see [Annex 1](#)), which is utilized during the Program Implementation phase (see [Chapter 5](#) for details) to pro-actively manage stakeholder expectations and communications. In all programs, stakeholder management should be done proactively throughout the program cycle.

Once you understand who the stakeholders are, the next step is to ascertain their needs and interests. The best way to do this is often by conducting stakeholder interviews or focus groups. Take time to draw out the true needs that create real benefits. In some cultures, it may be necessary to hold separate focus groups with male and female stakeholders and/or with different age groups to ascertain the different needs and interests of each group. Understanding stakeholder interests in and potential influence on the program and planning early for the management of stakeholder expectations can help the program team to avoid problems in the future and to benefit from positive stakeholder influences. Use of a Stakeholder Register is a recommended step in the Set Up and Planning phase for complex programs.

4.3 Program Work Plan

The remaining sections of this chapter focus on processes involved in the development of the Program Work Plan (PWP). Successful Program Implementation is largely determined by the planning. Creating a PWP is critical. Often planning is ignored in favor of starting work because of a sense of urgency. However, many fail to realize the value of program planning in saving time, money and reducing problems during implementation. It also serves to bring the team together so everyone understands their roles and collectively works towards the program objectives. Often, a “work plan” is thought of to be a simple gantt chart or schedule. However, effective PWPs are much broader and encompass planning for all aspects of program management. Coming out of the Program Identification and Design phase there may be a high-level PWP already developed. Depending on the complexity or risk areas of a specific program, large portions of the PWP will require further detailing by the PMO and available program team. Dedicated, focused time of key stakeholders to the development of the PWP can enable a quicker planning process without compromising comprehensive planning nor the required level of detail.

What is a Program Work Plan? Who creates it? What Should it Contain?

A Program Work Plan (PWP) inclusive of Key program parameters, coming from preliminary program documents, a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), a Program Schedule, a Coded Program Budget, and an End-of-Program Transition Plan is a Mercy Corps Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps. It is a document or set of documents that sets out program requirements and activities for multiple stakeholders – but critically the Program Team, including support staff, the PMO and formal partners – to work and

track against. Hence as much as possible, the Program Team, PMO, partners and any support personnel should participate in the PWP creation. If a particular role is not available at the time of PWP creation, the PMO should identify a substitute for the anticipated role and develop its requirements within the program.

The level of complexity of the PWP can be decided by the PMO and Portfolio Management: in some cases, a very basic PWP that consists only of a WBS (see 4.6.), Program Schedule, key M&E event plans, a Coded Program Budget, and an End-of-Program Transition Plan may be sufficient; with complex programs with multiple projects, stakeholders and partners, much more may be required. The table below summarizes elements that are sometimes included in PWPs for the consideration of each PMO, and denotes which of these elements are minimum requirements in Mercy Corps' context:

1. Implementation planning is comprehensive;
 2. Implementation planning is detailed;
 3. Implementation planning emphasizes participation;
 4. Implementation planning prioritizes iteration.
- From *A Guide to the PMD Pro*

Content	Mercy Corps Minimum Standard Requirement?
Program Title	Yes (from proposal or preliminary program scope statement, see Chapter 3)
Start Date/ End Date	Yes (from proposal or preliminary program scope statement, see Chapter 3)
Constituent Projects and Sub-Projects	No, but recommended for more complex programs
Donor(s) and Donor Compliance Requirements	Yes (from grant agreement(s))
Program Tracking/ Reporting Codes	No – discretion of PMO
Reporting Requirements	Yes (from grant agreement(s) and Stakeholder Register – see Chapter 3 , 4 , and 5)
Program Team	Yes (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5)
Key Support Personnel	No, but recommended
Key Skills Needed	Yes (see Chapter 5)
Delineation of Team/ Partner Roles & Responsibilities	Yes (see Chapter 5 , and also from proposal or preliminary program scope statement, see Chapter 3)
Key Operational and Support Requirements (supply chain, contracting, operations, security)	Yes (see Chapter 4)
Stakeholder Register	No, but recommended for more complex programs
Sectors and Technical Requirements	Yes (from proposal or preliminary program scope statement, see Chapter 3 , and from technical planning in Chapter 4)
Locations	Yes (from assessment and proposal or preliminary program scope statement, see Chapter 3)
Logical Framework	Yes (see Chapter 3)
Key M&E Event Plans	Yes (see Chapter 6)
Beneficiaries and Targeting	Yes (from proposal or preliminary program scope statement, see Chapter 3 , but will likely require additional planning)
Cross-Cutting Themes	Yes (see Chapter 4)
Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)	Yes (see Chapter 4)
Program Schedule	Yes (see Chapter 4)
Baseline Schedule with initial critical path	Yes (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5)

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Is/ Is Not Matrix ⁵⁹	No, but recommended (see Annex 2)
Risk Management Plan	No, but recommended for more complex programs
End of Program Transition Plan	Yes, (generally partially contained in proposal, see Chapter 3 , but must also be developed in the Set Up and Planning phase, elaborated in the Program Implementation phase, and finalized in the end of program transition phase – see Chapter 7)
Coded Program Budget	Yes (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4)

Of the minimum aspects of the PWP mentioned above, most are self-explanatory, or are summarized elsewhere in this document, in the annexes and in the *A Guide to the PMD Pro*. A typical Program Planning Workshop agenda is summarized below:

Attendees:		
List names and titles (include cross-functional representation, key external experts, key partners and community stakeholders)		
Reference Documents:		
Mercy Corps Proposal, Grant Agreement, Budget, other documents as available		
Agenda:		
Day 1 morning – Review Proposal & Logframe Brainstorm Is/Is Not Matrix (see sample in Annex 2) Review M&E Plans Review Budget	Day 2 morning – Create initial WBS Assign task ownership Develop WBS hierarchy	Day 3 morning – Create Schedule Discuss issues/concerns
Day 1 afternoon – Brainstorm Risks Develop Risk Matrix Determine Major Milestones	Day 2 afternoon* – Develop dependencies Estimate task duration	Day 3 afternoon – Determine what additional functional plans are required Determine next steps

Plan Early for High Risk Areas

Planning is required for all aspects of a program; cutting across all functions (see figure above). Through planning there is a higher probability that adequate time, money and resources will be allocated to achieve the desired logframe objectives and outputs. Planning cuts across all functions human resources, procurement, administration, logistics, security, compliance, monitoring and evaluation, technical and cross cutting themes. Depending on the program, some elements have higher risks with greater impacts if detailed plans are not developed early enough in the program lifecycle. Each program has specific areas of concern, however included in this chapter are common problem areas, where careful planning can have large benefits for program efficiency and effectiveness.

4.4 End-of-Program Transition Plan

It might seem counter-intuitive, but it is important to start thinking about End-of-Program Transition during the Set Up and Planning phase, and to include a preliminary End-of-Program Transition Plan in the PWP. There is no particular format for this plan, but it should describe both the administrative close-out processes and the programmatic transitional processes required – since this is discussed in Chapter 7 and is not repeated here. The End-of-Program Transition Plan is preliminarily developed during the Set Up and Planning Phase, iterated or refined during the Program Implementation phase, and executed during the End-of-Program Transition phase. **A written End-of-Program Transition Plan is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps** and is further discussed in [Chapter 7](#).

⁵⁹ When specifying the program scope, an “Is/ Is Not Matrix” may be helpful to help various stakeholders understand what the program is and is not designed to do. See [Annex 2](#).

4.5 Program Technical Requirements⁶⁰ and Partnerships Plan

In the Set Up and Planning phase it is important to specify what technical skills are required to implement the program. Resulting tasks and time estimates will later be integrated into the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS, see 4.6.) and Program Schedule (see 4.7.) within the Program Work Plan. **Planning for technical requirements, cross-cutting theme needs and partnerships and sub-grants is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.** Common technical sectors for Mercy Corps include food security and livelihoods, public health, nutrition, water/ sanitation, agriculture, economic recovery and development, governance, climate change, disaster risk reduction, and emergency response, although other technical sectors feature in Mercy Corps programming as well. It is beyond the scope of this manual to describe the technical aspects of sector-specific programming, because these vary greatly by sector, but the table below provides an example. Guidebooks, tip sheets and lessons learned documents for most sectors can be found on the Digital Library. Regional or local technical specialists, colleague agencies and TSU are also good resources for planning technical requirements for your program or project. Remember that the technical requirements will also inform the 'description of deliverables' required in the Program Implementation phase (see Chapter 5).

Program Activity Area	Skills	Requirements	Inputs
Community-based nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation awareness campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of Essential nutrition actions; Essential hygiene and sanitation actions Community Mobilization Skills Training Abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information, Education and Communication Materials Training materials for community facilitators Community mobilization training Training of Trainers (ToT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public health specialist to assist with design of key messages Artist to design IEC materials Training designer to design training curriculum and deliver ToT Community mobilization trainer
Food Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warehousing and distribution skills End-use monitoring Understanding of caloric intake requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warehousing and transportation capabilities End-use check forms; end-use check training Ration calculators; training on caloric requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warehousing and transport facilities Food assistance specialist to design forms, conduct training

Plan for Cross-Cutting Themes

In the Set Up and Planning phase it is important to specify what cross-cutting themes must be integrated into Program Implementation. Resulting tasks and time estimates will later be integrated into the WBS and Program Schedule. Similar to other technical requirements, resources for planning the cross cutting themes can be found on the Digital Library or through technical specialists, either locally or on the TSU Common cross-cutting themes include youth, gender, urban, community mobilization, governance, peace building, environment, and HIV/ AIDS. It is beyond the scope of this manual to describe the cross-cutting themes, because these vary by program, but the table that follows provides an example.

⁶⁰ Technical requirements refer to the sector expertise required to effectively implement a program. For example, a maternal and child health program may require public health expertise and a water and sanitation program might require expertise in water systems engineering and waste management as well as public health.

Example Cross-Cutting Theme Planning Matrix			
Cross-Cutting Theme	Skills	Requirements	Inputs
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Team must understand gender issues as they pertain to the program and its beneficiary communities, and must understand how gender translates to practical activities during Program Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender-sensitive participatory methods, including separate male/ female focus groups in some cases Disaggregated Stakeholder Register by gender 50% of Program Team must be women 50% of community training participants must be women 50% of the officers of community based organizations formed or strengthened must be women Disaggregated program Monitoring and Evaluation data by gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender-specific program policies within Program Charter (if available), or set by PMO Gender-related program requirements integrated into WBS Orientation of Program Team by gender specialist

Partnerships and Sub-Grant and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Requirements

Most Mercy Corps programs are implemented with partners or sub-recipients, which require formal sub-grant agreements or partnership agreements. Other programs require non-financial MoUs with collaborating partners. When initiating a program, it is important to finalize partnership requirements and estimate the time required to draft, negotiate, review, and assign sub-grant agreements and MoUs. Sub-grants over \$100,000 or sub-grants to US registered NGOs must be drafted with the involvement of the HQ-based Finance, Training and Compliance team. Likely, partners will be integral in planning the implementation of the program and thus these partnerships need to be forming as the Set Up and Planning phase is occurring. Many teams find that successful partnerships are those highly task-focused, where all partners are actively engaged in delivering tangible and practical results. Mercy Corps' *Local Partnerships: A Guide for Partnering with Civil Society, Business, and Government Groups* is an essential resource for forming and managing partnerships with Mercy Corps' 10 Principles of Partnership highlighted within the Guide. The *Sub-grant Management Manual* should guide partnerships involving the transfer of resources. Both guides can be found in the Program Management Toolkit on the Digital Library

While the contractor relationship is very straightforward (namely, contractors are contracted to carry out a certain task for a certain fee), the partner relationship is more complex, because Mercy Corps and the partner may wish to engage in partner capacity development, which requires monitoring, mentoring, and, in many cases, formal training. For these partnerships, it may be beneficial to development a Capacity Development Plan (CDP – see *Local Partnerships Guide*). These capacity building tasks and requirements should be integrated into the PWP with the information available. More detail may need to be added later, but in this manner time and resources can be allocated for use at an unknown later time.

4.6 Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)

The Work Breakdown Structure is a hierarchical tree used to organize the activities of a program into related tasks. A program is divided into projects or components, and these are then divided into sub-projects or sub-components, and then into tasks or work packages, which is the lowest level of work. The work package feeds into various levels of summary tasks and activities that eventually support the project objectives. WBS is described in greater detail with

examples in PMD Pro. In addition, the steps for developing a WBS can be found in [Annex 3: Tip Sheet for Creating a Work Breakdown Structure \(WBS\)](#).

The WBS is generally created prior to or in conjunction with the creation of the Program Schedule. The program team and any internal or external stakeholders preferably create the WBS and schedule through a participatory Program Planning Workshop. This workshop may be quite abbreviated for small and straightforward programs, or may require considerable amounts of time and a relatively large number of people for large or complex programs.

Development of a Work Breakdown Structure as a component of the Program Work Plan is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.

Plan for Supply Chain, Contracting, Operations and Security

For a program requiring supply chain (procurement, warehousing, distribution, transportation) and contracting of goods and services, understanding these requirements and the time and risks of that procurement is a large portion of making this type of program successful. Time requirements for finalizing these contracts and sub-agreements should be discussed with responsible support personnel and incorporated into the Program Schedule, ensuring adequate lead time to allow Mercy Corps' standard sub-grant business processes (as per the *Field Finance Manual*) and contract business process (as per the *Field Procurement Manual*) to be followed.

A significant mistake is not considering supply and contracting in the planning phase. In a program requiring procurement, the tendering of a contract, lead time of delivery, and impact if delivery of poor quality occurs can be 1/3 to 1/2 of a program's schedule. Planning, implementing and monitoring supply chain is key in these types of programs. Points for program teams to consider are summarized in the table below:

Tips for Supply Chain and Contract Requirements	
Procurement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate time required for procurement training of Program Team in the early part of the Program Implementation phase
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate tasks and time requirements start-up procurement in the early part of the Program Implementation phase
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate time requirements for large tenders under the program
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine preferred supplier agreements that will be needed, if any
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine applications for waivers that will be needed, if any
Storage/Warehousing	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate time required for warehousing training for the Program Team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine if warehouse leases will be required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate total space requirements for program goods and supplies, and then increase these by 25%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine whether the program includes any "kits" that can be assembled early in the Program Implementation phase
<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate stock levels and stock turnaround time
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set procedures for physical counts

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Distribution
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider likely distribution procedures, and time requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Consider likely distribution documentation that will be required <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate time required for distribution training for Program Team <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate staffing requirements to execute distribution procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Consider optimal packaging of program materials <input type="checkbox"/> Consider routine program supplies that will be required
Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine vehicle needs and discuss lease vs. purchase decisions. Estimate time requirements to acquire fleet – and secure waivers or prior approvals as required. <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate time requirements for registration, insurance, and provision of vehicle equipment. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine need for preferred supplier arrangements for fuel, maintenance. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine driver staffing needs <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate time required for driver security training

Setting up security for a new program can be a time and cost intensive process. Often these requirements must be in place before programmatic work can start. Not doing so can significantly affect the success of the program. Mercy Corps *Field Security Manual* and the office's Security Focal Point, in established country offices, are essential resources for planning security requirements. Some points to consider are also summarized in the table below.

Tips for Operational and Security Requirements
Operations Staffing
<input type="checkbox"/> Initially, base operations staffing levels on the “ideal case” <input type="checkbox"/> For any program requiring more than office supplies in the supply chain, plan for a dedicated officer or assistant <input type="checkbox"/> For any program requiring warehousing, plan for supervisory and labor requirements. <input type="checkbox"/> For any program requiring heavy maintenance or construction work, plan for appropriate technicians
Office Space and Supplies
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine the number of Program Team members requiring quiet or secure space vs. those requiring “hot desk” space only <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate office space availability and cost, including modular temporary solutions <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate time required for office-set up, ICT equipment set-up, and power back-up <input type="checkbox"/> Determine maintenance requirements
Security
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine the need for a security assessment <input type="checkbox"/> If assessment is needed, estimate time and cost requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Determine physical security needs of both staff and property <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate timeframe required to implement security measures <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate legality and licensing of redundant communications capacity (VHF, HF, Satellite Equipment)

Conducting supply chain and contracting, personnel, operations and security planning is a Minimum Standard of Program Management at Mercy Corps.

4.7 Team Requirements and Structure

According to global project and program management standards, the Program Team is “acquired” (formed, or recruited) during the Program Implementation phase. This is sometimes confusing, since it is difficult to think about initiating and planning a program without a Program Team. However, here it is important to remember that many aspects of the Set Up and Planning phases may be carried out by the PMO and Portfolio Management, before a Program Manager and Program Team are assigned. In other cases, a Program Manager and possibly key program team members might be assigned and lead some aspects of planning, but the remaining team members might not be recruited until later.

Since the majority of the Program Team is “acquired” in the Program Implementation phase, the important step in the Set Up and Planning phase is for the PMO to determine the right mix of team members and skills and the appropriate organizational structure. The identification of required skills can aid the recruitment process, and can also be used as the basis for a Team Member Training Needs Assessment (see [Chapter 5](#)). Ideally, the PMO should create position descriptions with qualification requirements in the Set Up and Planning phase, so that in the Program Implementation phase these position descriptions can simply be reviewed and updated prior to recruitment (see [Chapter 5](#)). During the planning phase these positions should be designated in the schedule and roles and responsibilities matrix in anticipation of the work they will perform.

Organizational Structure and its Relationship to Program Management

In planning the appropriate program team it is important to understand what the organizational structure is or what should be used. Each portfolio manager and PMO must decide on the right kind of structure for the purposes of the portfolio, because each has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is beyond the scope of this manual to go into detail about these structures, but the PMO should research structural options, discuss which structure is most conducive to program success without compromising other business processes, should discuss the structure, the rationale for the structure, and the relationship between the structure and the program with the Program Manager and the Program Team. The organizational structure should also consider existing programs and how the new staff will interact.

No matter what type of organizational structure will be best fitted for managing a particular program, in assembling organizational structures one common task is critical: A clear description of roles and responsibilities and reporting lines for each member of the organization and partner involved with the program. This translates into clearly written position descriptions, clear reporting structure and clearly defined approval authorities. Each program must have a Program Organizational Chart that visually depicts the working and reporting relationships between team members, and between the Program Team and the broader portfolio. ***A clearly defined Program Organizational Chart for each program is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.***

As the program progresses, the organizational structure may also evolve, so the Program Organizational Chart should be regularly updated. It is important to share the updated Program Organizational Chart with staff and partners so everyone understand the lines of reporting. It is the responsibility of the Program Manager and the PMO to enforce these reporting lines and to ensure there is clear communication within the team.

4.8 Program Schedule

Once the WBS has been created to the desired level of detail, and once task owners have been identified and documented, it is the time to create a Program Schedule.

Creating the schedule is a valuable team building activity. Through discussing who is delivering what, to whom, and if tasks can be done at the same time or one after the other allows team members to gain mutual understanding and consensus of the sequencing of Program Implementation. Valuable risk mitigation discussions help to identify tasks which are dependent on external factors and interventions that can help to minimize potential negative impacts on the program. Collaborative scheduling with available team members, program support staff and partners will also help the Program Manager to define and schedule internal and external communications and ensure that modalities and frequency for quality assurance are given sufficient consideration from the very beginning.

The finalized initial Program Schedule is called the “baseline schedule.” This is used at the program Kick-Off Meeting with relevant stakeholders to set schedule expectations and understanding. During implementation, this

schedule is tracked and modified as needed. It is tracked using % completion of tasks, and evaluated against the original baseline with its interim and major milestones for providing a measurement of success at any point in the program. The Program Schedule is a “linked” schedule that specifies the dependencies between each work package or activity in the Work Breakdown Structure. Having a linked schedule is important because this allows the schedule to adjust itself each time actual start dates and actual finish dates for tasks vary from planned start dates and planned finish dates. **Development of a Program Schedule as a component of the Program Work Plan is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

Schedule Tools

Complex programs will benefit from scheduling with the use of project management software, such as MS Project, which assists program teams to identify dependencies and track progress against the baseline schedule.

When creating a schedule, inserting milestones can be a useful tool for tracking major points of program progress while giving the Program Team smaller successes (“incremental benefits”) on which to focus rather than the entire program’s goal. Milestones are significant events, which mark completion of a phase or subproject and can be used to group major components of a program. The top levels of the WBS are a good source for milestones.

Critical path is another schedule tool, which focuses the Program Team on priorities. The Critical Path is the route through which the program tasks take the shortest amount of time to complete and is easily identified by MS Project. If a single task on the critical path is delayed, it means all the tasks behind it are delayed. There is no slack time, float or extra days, therefore unlike other tasks, delays in tasks on the critical path can delay the delivery of the entire program. Using this tool the Program Manager can prioritize a critical path task over another, reducing delays in the program without having to track all detailed tasks all the time.

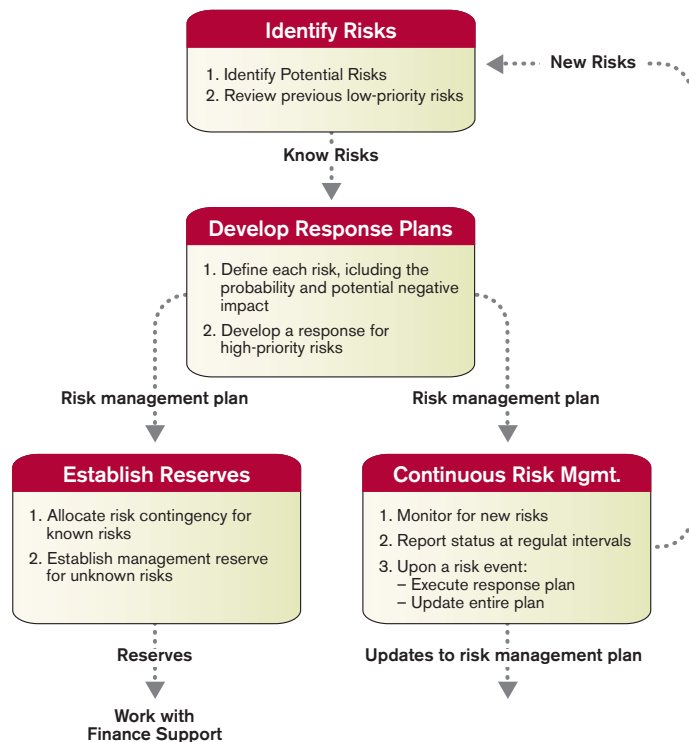
The steps for developing a schedule can be found in [Annex 4: Tip Sheet for Creating a Schedule](#).

Risk Management Planning

Risk management is an important part of program management. Every program has risks that threaten to cause program failure. Program risk management involves firstly identifying the risks that impact your program. Although often overlooked, it is important to identify as many risks to your program as possible, and be prepared if something bad happens. It’s best to get as many people involved in the risk identification process as possible. Examples of common programmatic risks include:

- Proposal time and cost estimates too optimistic
- Stakeholder review and feedback cycle too slow
- Unexpected budget cuts
- Lack of resource commitment slows work
- Currency fluctuations disrupt budget availability or accuracy of projections
- Political instability causes government partners to hinder community cooperation
- Security risks block traditional transportation routes or stakeholder participation

Risks can be tracked using a simple risk matrix. Add each risk you have identified to your risk matrix; write down what you will do in the event it occurs, and what you will do to prevent it from occurring. Next, analyze the risks. Risk analysis can take many forms, however, they usually revolve around providing answers to three questions:



1. What is the probability of the risk event occurring?
2. What would be the impact on the program if the risk event were to occur?
3. What steps can be taken to minimize the impact of the risk event if it did happen?

Answering the third question provides your risk mitigation strategy for each risk. You then need to decide for each risk who will implement the strategy, with which resources and by when. See the Risk Management Tip Sheet in [Annex 5](#) for steps of risk management planning.

Review your risk log on a regular basis, adding new risks as they occur during the life of the program. Remember, when risks are ignored they don't go away.

Risk Management is an iterative activity performed throughout the entire duration of the program. In essence the Program Manager is a risk manager. The PMO and Program Team should be constantly anticipating what could impact the program and how to avoid or mitigate those impacts keeping the project moving forward, as per the “Managing Issues” section of [Chapter 5](#). An initial Risk Assessment should be done in the proposal phase so high probability and severe risks can be incorporated into the proposal plan (contingency or mitigation planning). This initial Risk Assessment should now be re-assessed in the planning phase, when there is more information and a larger cross-functional team is available for input.

Plan for Quality Assurance

Descriptions of individual program deliverables form the basis for quality assurance. Descriptions of deliverables are created by the Program Team throughout the Program Implementation phase, on an as needed basis, not all at once. Examples of descriptions of deliverables include:

- Training agendas, materials, and facilitators' notes for trainings
- Design drawings and Bill of Quantities for infrastructure
- Scope of Work or Terms of Reference for technical consultancies
- Approach and process documentation (for example, a community mobilization process, or nutrition rehabilitation process, or a farmers' capacity building process)

Ensure that a relevant Program Team member is assigned to develop each of these descriptions of deliverables, and that these are approved by the Program Manager as they are developed.

All programs require quality checks either through an M&E process or through quality assurance checks or both. During the course of implementation, quality assurance checks should be conducted, and should be included within the Program Schedule in the PWP, and should be carried out by someone outside of the direct Program Team.

An example of what is described above is summarized in the table below:

Deliverables	1,000 latrines
Description of Deliverables	Standard latrine drawing and Bill of Quantities
Quality Assurance Checks	Visits during and after construction to confirm the total number of latrines (physical verification), and the actual design of the latrines as compared to the planned design within the description of deliverables

Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring and Evaluation Processes compare program performance to the objectives and indicators in the original proposal, as well as to the Program Work Plan and Indicator Plan. M&E data are actively used through the Program Implementation phase to track that the program is achieving desired results. If there are unacceptable variances, Monitoring and Evaluation results can be used to make adjustments to program plans through a change process (see [Chapter 5](#)). Based on the degree of change, elements of the PWP may need to be updated to reflect the new actions.

Planning for effective M&E begins in the Program Identification and Design phase by incorporating SMART objectives (see [section 3.6](#)) and well thought-out indicators into the program logframe. Implementation plans are then developed in the planning phase. A well-developed M&E plan can take time to develop and the design should

begin as soon as possible to then enable implementation planning and integration into the Program Work Plan as early in the process as possible. Effective evaluation planning should begin at this phase, with appropriate budgeting and staffing for M&E and allocation of time in the PWP. The following components make up the M&E Plan, additional information for each can be found in [Chapter 6](#) and DM&E-in-a-Box⁶¹.

Indicator Plan: The indicator plan will enable planning (time, budget, human and other resources required) for any required M&E work. This plan should be done before the WBS process so that the resulting requirements can be reflected in detail in the WBS and then integrated into the Program Schedule. Include Mission Metrics indicator alignments in the indicator plan.

M&E Schedule: Include monitoring as a key management activity and make resources available to carry it out, including roles and responsibilities, budgeting time for baselines, regular data collection, review and reporting, and midterm and final evaluations. Include key management and implementation tasks, persons responsible and clear targets for achieving them so that we can track performance over time. The M&E Schedule should be integrated into the broader Program Schedule.

4.9 Program Budget

At the Set Up and Planning phase, the proposal budget created in the Program Identification and Design phase requires additional work in order to provide the level of detail necessary to plan and manage program activities. Program budget planning consists of three distinct parts:

1. Additional detailed breakdown of the proposal budget
2. Financial coding of the detailed budget.
3. Creating activity level budgets.

Parts 1 and 2 above are related to overall budget management, and occur prior to beginning implementation. This should be done by the Program Manager with the support of the Finance Manager and the Program Team. Part 3 is the creation of budgets for individual activities implemented under a program and are generally prepared by the Program Team as the individual activities are identified. Initial activity budgets can be prepared in the Set Up and Planning phase, with additional activity level budgeting continuing during implementation. However, it is important that activity budgets be prepared and approved well in advance and in coordination with relevant operations staff to ensure sufficient time for implementation of logistics requirements.

Additional Detailed Breakdown of the Proposal Budget.

Proposal budgets are generally not prepared at the level of detail required to assign budget responsibilities and monitor actual expenses against the budget. Requirements in the Set Up and Planning phase include:

- Divide the budget between “program costs” and “support costs.” This division is used to assign separate budget responsibility for program costs and support costs.
- Divide the budget among offices supporting and implementing the program. Each budget line needs to be assigned to a specific office. This includes program activity costs.
- Show budget amounts by month for the first year of implementation, and annually for the remaining years of implementation.

See “*Creating Detailed Grant Implementation Budgets*” document on the Digital Library⁶².

⁶¹ DM&E-in-a-Box: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=p&p=dme>

⁶² The Creating Detailed Grant Implementation Budgets Tip Sheet was under development at the release of this manual.

Financial Coding of the Detailed Budget

After the detailed budget from the Program Identification and Design phase has been broken down to provide additional detail, the “coded” budget is created by assigning financial codes to each individual line of the budget. How the budget is coded determines how expenses are classified in the financial software. This level of detail provided by the coding determines what management reports can be provided to the Program Manager or PMO by Finance.

The Finance Manager and the Program Manager or PMO should work together to determine the coding structure that will be used for the activity, task, or work package accounting code dimensions, called the “Activity” dimension in Mercy Corps’ financial software. A unique code should be assigned to each individual activity.

For specific instructions on coding the budget see the *Mercy Corps Coding Methodology*⁶³. **Development of a Coded Program Budget as a component of the PWP is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

Creating an Activity Budget

Activity budgets are detailed budgets with lines for each activity by the individual types of costs needed to be incurred for activity implementation. Generally these are in alignment with the ‘work package’ levels of the Program Schedule or Work Breakdown Structure.

Often, when a proposal budget is being created (see [Chapter 3](#)), program activity costs are shown as lump sum amounts with little, if any detail, on how they will actually be spent. Activities budgets are a subset of these lump sum budget lines and provide the detail of what the estimated individual costs are to implement the activity.

Creating an activity budget can occur during the Set Up and Planning phase, or can be an on-going action when the detailed costs related to implementing an individual activity are often not known at the start of a program. Steps for creating an activity budget (these steps are done at the same time, instead of in a linear sequence) include:

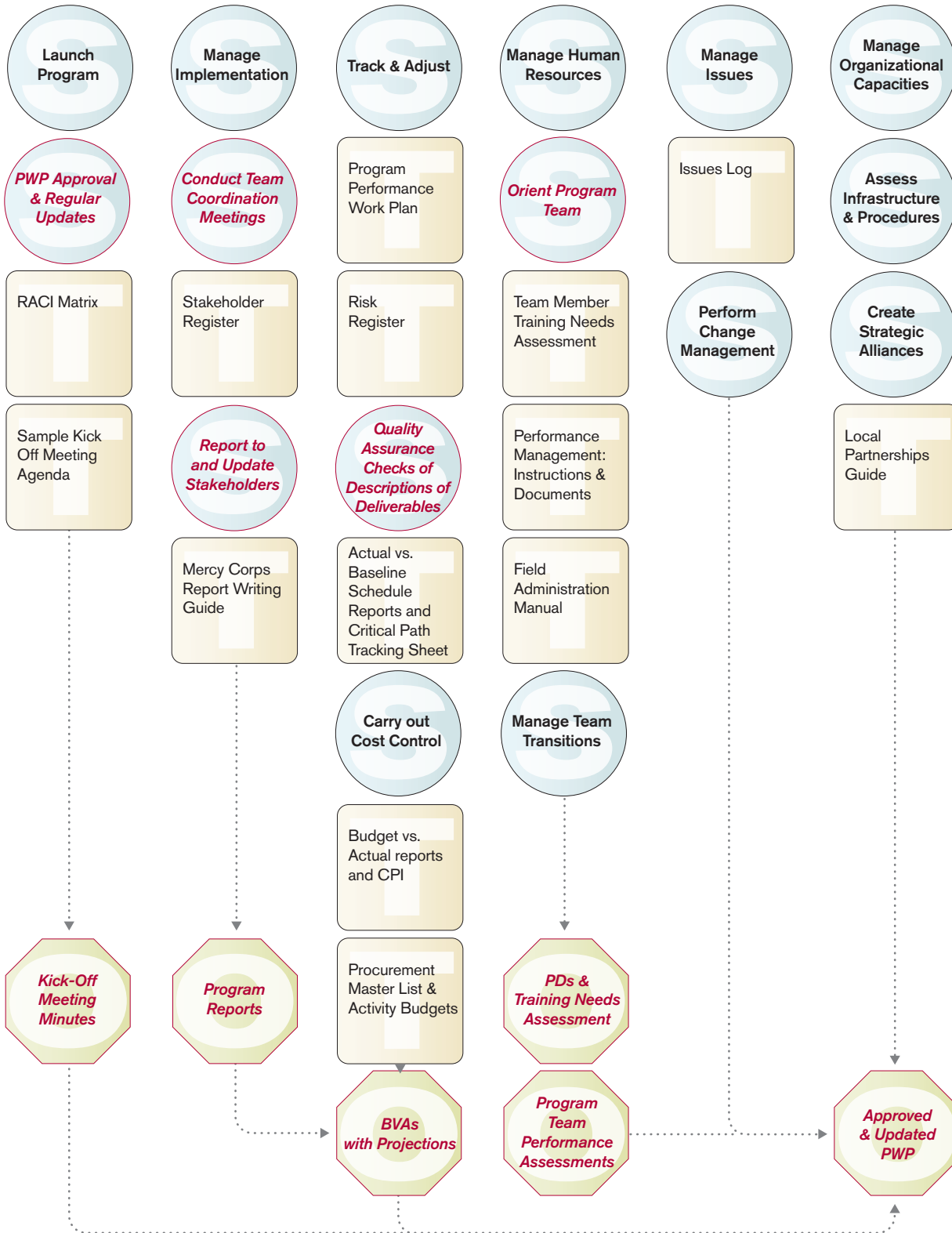
1. Identify each step necessary to implement the program activity.
2. Identify types of costs associated with each step.
3. Identify number of units needed for the particular cost.
4. Estimate unit cost.
5. Create the budget

An example of steps to take in creation of an activity budget, see [Annex 6](#): Example Process for Creating an Activity Budget.

⁶³Mercy Corps Coding Methodology: https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/Mercy_Corps_Coding_Methodology.pdf

Chapter 5: The Program Implementation Phase

Implementation



Minimum Standards are Red Italic

Minimum Standards for the Program Implementation Phase:

- Program Work Plan (PWP) is approved and regularly updated (see [5.1](#))
- Program Kick-Off Meeting is conducted, and minutes are available (see [5.1](#))
- Program Team Coordination Meetings take place at least once per quarter with documented minutes (see [5.2](#))
- Program Progress reports (narrative and financial) exist and include progress toward indicator targets (see [5.2](#))
- Scheduled and ad hoc reports and updates are communicated to stakeholders (see [5.2](#))
- Actual Program Schedule (within PWP) is updated against the Baseline Schedule by Program Manager and submitted to supervisor on a monthly basis (see [5.3](#))
- Descriptions of deliverables exist, and quality assurance checks are carried out at least twice per program year (see [5.3](#))
- Budget vs. Actual reports for the Program Budget are prepared monthly, and projections against the Program Budget are prepared quarterly (see [5.3](#))
- Program Team receives copies of, and is oriented on: Proposal and Logical Framework, M&E plan, Program Work Plan (PWP), Kick-Off Meeting minutes and relevant parts of the Program Budget and Grant Agreement. Program Team is oriented on administration and finance procedures (FAM, FFM, FPM), and roles & responsibilities for contractors and partners (see [5.4](#))
- Program Team is recruited; roles, responsibilities, and required skills have been articulated; Position Descriptions exist; Training Needs Assessment is carried out (see [5.4](#))
- Program Team member performance is assessed and documented by Program Manager within three months of program start, and annually thereafter (see [5.4](#))

Monitoring & Evaluation Minimum Standards for the Implementation Phase

- Key program M&E events (at a minimum, baseline, end-line, and routine monitoring) have been carried out, and reports of these events exist (see [6.3](#) & [6.4](#))
- Basic M&E data management system exists (see [6.4](#))
- Evaluation report exists (see [6.4](#))

About This Chapter

The Program Implementation phase follows the Identification & Design and Set Up and Planning phases. It is the phase in which the designed and planned program is executed and tracked. The program management steps in the Program Implementation phase are not necessarily linear –many steps will take place in an iterative manner furthering the detail of program planning and using monitoring, evaluation and quality control feedback.

This chapter describes the key program management steps during the Program Implementation phase. While much of the work that is done during the Program Implementation phase is about technical performance (that is, specific to a sector or sectors), there are certain program management processes that can help to ensure good programmatic results across all sectors. These are described below, divided into the following categories: [5.1](#)) Launching the Program; [5.2](#)) Managing Program Implementation; [5.3](#)) Program Tracking and Adjustment; [5.4](#)) Managing Program Human Resources; [5.5](#)) Managing Issues; and, [5.6](#)) Managing Organizational Capacities. Implementation relies heavily on the Program Work Plan (PWP) developed in the Set Up and Planning phase (see [Chapter 4](#)), which should be regularly updated throughout the Program Implementation phase.

5.1. Launching the Program

Approval of Program Work Plan (PWP)

The first step of the Program Implementation phase is for portfolio management and the PMO to approve the Program Work Plan that was developed in the Set Up and Planning phase. If a Program Manager has been appointed at this point, they will also be involved in this step; however, in some cases, the Program Manager will not be recruited until after the Program Implementation phase has begun. The purpose of PWP approval is to confirm that those responsible for creating an enabling environment for program success are in agreement with the program's plans.

At this point, the reviewers should also ensure that tasks for cross-cutting themes and program support have been incorporated into the PWP during the Set Up and Planning phase, and that lessons learned documentation from previous, similar Mercy Corps interventions has been considered. **Approval of and updates to the Program Work Plan must be provided in writing and must be included in the Program File as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

Review Assignment of Individuals to Tasks within Program Work Plan (PWP)

When the Program Work Plan is created in the Set Up and Planning Phase, members of the Program Team – and, in some cases, external stakeholders such as contractors and partners – are assigned to individual tasks within the PWP. Early in the Program Implementation phase, The Program Manager should review and update these assignments to ensure that they remain current with the planned program team composition and the staffing structures of partners and contractors, or are adjusted to reflect changes that have occurred.

If a stakeholder register was created in the Set Up and Planning phase (recommended for more complex programs) it should be reviewed and updated. Any new stakeholders that have emerged since the register was initially developed should be added. Consider using a RACI Matrix to help manage stakeholders. Further information and a sample RACI Matrix can be found in the *A Guide to the PMD Pro*.

Conduct Kick-Off Meeting

Once the PWP is approved, a Kick-Off Meeting should be held. Ideally, this should be done with the full Program Team after they have been hired, including finance, operations and PMO team members, as well as key external stakeholders such as partner agency leadership. It is important to ensure that team members who join the team after this meeting are fully oriented to the key program documents and the PWP. Important emphasis during the Kick-Off Meeting should be placed on establishing a common understanding and acceptance of the logframe, and the baseline schedule, milestones and critical path. As well, the Kick-Off Meeting is a good time to establish accepted team behavior and setting of cultural standards, which can also be used as training points when new team members arrive so expectations are understood. It is important to set guidelines for how a team will function on a regular basis; weekly, monthly, and quarterly. The Program Manager must define what the reporting structures are, how items will be communicated, what regular meetings will be held, what mechanisms will be used for quality assurance and how changes will be handled. Please refer to [Annex 7](#) for a Sample Kick-Off Meeting Agenda. **Minutes of the Kick-Off Meeting must be included in the Program File as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

It is important to ensure team members feel comfortable to ask questions and understand the range of documents created for program management purposes. Cultural differences may exist and should be considered. While some cultures heavily rely on documents in written form, others may see greater value in verbal communication and may not see the value in the longer-term PWP. It is up to the Program Manager and the PMO to negotiate these differences and find balance so team members are not overwhelmed with the documentation; have clarity in their role and responsibilities within the program; and feel like they can effectively contribute to program thinking.

5.2. Managing Program Implementation

Schedule and Conduct Regular Coordination Meetings

Regular coordination meetings, which begin with the Kick-Off Meeting and an early meeting to clarify roles and responsibilities, should be conducted during the course of the Program Implementation phase. Topics covered in these coordination meetings should include program progress, technical updates, stakeholder management, cost management, Monitoring and Evaluation tasks and results, program transition strategy, and potential programmatic or contextual issues and changes that may influence program scope or require pre-approval or justification. The PMO and Program Manager should determine the frequency of these meeting. **Program Team Coordination Meetings must take place at least once per quarter (every three months) as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.** Coordination of sub-teams may occur with much greater frequency, for example weekly implementation status meetings. It is recommended that team meetings include key program support staff (logistics, administration, finance, heads of office, etc.) and partners in addition to the direct program team. In some cases it is useful to invite other stakeholders at the discretion of the Program Manager. It is a good strategy to circulate an agenda prior to the meeting so team members come prepared to discuss specific program

information. These meetings also offer an opportunity to do culturally appropriate team building exercises to strengthen communication and trust and reinforce feelings of team membership and enjoyment within the workspace.

Implement Communications

During the Set Up and Planning phase, communications requirements were identified and included in the PWP and stakeholder register (recommended for complex programs). Below are descriptions of typical reporting performed during the Program Implementation phase.

Cross-check Reporting Schedule within Grant Agreement and PWP: Most programs are associated with one or more awards (grants), which generally come with grant agreements that specify donor reporting requirements. Mercy Corps' Report Writing Guide provides useful in-depth guidance for structuring and writing monitoring reports, including a sample reporting format⁶⁴. This is also a good time to enter Mission Metrics alignment and scheduled report dates in the Mission Metrics⁶⁵ Data System.

In some countries, organizations are required to share program updates with the host country government. During the planning phase, the Program Manager should cross-check that all internal, host country government and other stakeholder reporting requirements have been incorporated into the PWP within the Program Schedule, and that adequate information gathering, writing and review time for each report is allocated. ***The Program Manager must ensure that professional quality program progress reports that include progress toward indicator targets are filed regularly as per the requirements and that all reports exist with proof of their submission within the Program File as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.*** All data and events that are reported in the program progress reports should be easily verifiable from the contents of the program file.

Prepare Fact Sheet and Appoint a Spokesperson: In some cases, at the discretion of portfolio management, the PMO and Program Manager may wish to prepare a program fact sheet (a one-page document summarizing the program for external communication purposes) and/ or appoint a program spokesperson (generally the Program Manager, but sometimes another position-holder for large or complex programs) to streamline external communications and public relations.

Define Communication Expectations of Each Stakeholder; Report Accordingly: The communication expectations of each stakeholder should be included in the PWP and in the Stakeholder Register where applicable (see [Chapter 4](#)) and communication should be carried out accordingly. For example, a dispersed Program Team may require weekly updates; host country government stakeholders may require a report every six months; donors may require a report every three months; and, beneficiary groups and headquarters stakeholders may require ad hoc reports. The Program Manager may also wish to consider scheduled or ad hoc reporting of program highlights or achievement of milestones, to all key stakeholders, which is sometimes a good way to manage program communications proactively. ***It is a Minimum Standard for scheduled and ad hoc reports and updates to be communicated to stakeholders and documented in the Program File with reference dates for Program Management at Mercy Corps.***

5.3. Program Tracking and Adjustment

During the Set Up and Planning phase many plans are created and incorporated into the PWP, which is then used in the Program Implementation phase to guide the team in anticipation of achieving successful outcomes. A major role of the Program Manager during implementation is the incremental (day-by-day) tracking and adjustment of the PWP to ensure continued success. The purpose of tracking is to look for variation or drifting away from the plan, especially the program parameters, schedule and budget. If the variation becomes great enough, the Program Manager and team must make adjustments. This may require small changes in activities or set up of a significant re-planning effort, which can have program-wide impacts. Typical tracking areas detailed below include tracking the schedule, analysis of M&E data, quality assurance, cost control, supply chain tracking, monitoring and mentoring of partners and risk tracking.

64 MC Report-writing Guide: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/Docs/Report%20Writing%20Guide%20DME.pdf>

65 Mission Metrics Indicator Guidelines: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=all&h=dt&q=mission+metrics+guidelines>

Tracking the Schedule

Weekly or as appropriate, the Program Manager should update the Program Schedule by updating program tasks completion status. Especially for complex programs, it is recommended that Program Managers do this in Mercy Corps' recommended project management software (MS Project), and share the updates with the Program Team and the PMO on a regular basis. It is critical that schedule updates be proactively shared and clearly understood by the Program Team. In the event that the updated Program Schedule shows significant variance between the baseline or expected schedule and actual schedule, the Program Manager, the Program Team, and the PMO may need to discuss corrective action (see Manage Issues). **The Program Manager must update the actual schedule against the baseline schedule and provide to their supervisor on a monthly basis an updated schedule shown against the original baseline schedule as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

Using the Critical Path for Tracking: During the schedule tracking process, the critical path is used to prioritize team work, ensuring that priority activities are being worked on at any particular time. The critical path, as seen in [Chapter 4](#), refers to the shortest path of planned activities until the end of the program. This is important because delays in the critical path will lead to delays in the overall program. A Program Manager is able to use this tool to make the most efficient use of a team's time.

Tracking of the critical path and larger schedule is done most easily through the use of software such as Microsoft Project which has the capability to provide reports against the baseline schedule. For instances where this is done manually, Annex 8: Sample Baseline Schedule Tracking Sheet may be helpful.

Analysis of M&E Data

M&E data can be a useful check to ensure that the program is on track to achieve outcomes as well as double-checking achievements against the schedule. See [Chapter 6](#) for more information.

Carry Out Quality Assurance

During the course of implementation, quality assurance checks must be conducted. As described in [Chapter 4](#), the descriptions of deliverables are the basis against which quality assurance checks are conducted. Descriptions of deliverables must be developed as individual activities become known (training workshop, construction project, etc.) during the Program Implementation phase. Quality assurance checks should be scheduled within the Program Schedule, and should be carried out by someone outside of the direct program team (ideally by the PMO or HQ-based Program Officer and an appropriately trained evaluator), together with the Program Manager. **As a Minimum Standard for Project Management at Mercy Corps, Descriptions of Deliverables must be developed and quality assurance checks must be carried out at least twice per program year.** During quality assurance checks, actual deliverables should be checked against planned descriptions of deliverables, and any discrepancies should be reported to the program team, PMO, and portfolio management so that corrective action, if required, can be taken. In some cases, the PMO or Program Manager may wish to prepare checklists to make quality assurance checks easier. Quality Assurance is different to routine monitoring in that it focuses on comparisons the quality of actual outputs to the descriptions of deliverables as opposed to measurements of established program indicators.

Carry Out Cost Control

During the course of implementation, **monthly Budget vs. Actual Reports must be prepared and analyzed and projections should be prepared at least quarterly as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.** Generally these are prepared as a Finance function, and analyzed by: Finance, the Program

CPI Example:

The CPI is the ratio between money spent and time elapsed. A Program Team is 8 months into a 24-month, \$600,000 program. This means that 33% (8/ 24) of the program duration has elapsed.

The Budget vs. Actual report as of the 8th month shows expenditures against the Program Budget of \$150,000, or 25% (\$150,000/ \$600,000).

CPI is calculated by taking the percentage of the budget spent and dividing it by the percentage of the time elapsed (25%/ 33%), or 0.76. Since this is less than 1, action to accelerate expenditure should be considered.

Manager, relevant members of the Program Team, the PMO and, in some cases, Portfolio Management. Budget vs. Actual Reports compare actual expenditures to the original budget – as drafted during the identification & design phase and finalized during the Set Up and Planning phase.

When a Budget vs. Actual Report is filed, a Cost-Performance Index (CPI) should be calculated (see example to the right). This simply takes the ratio between the percentage of time elapsed and the percentage of money spent. To the extent possible, the CPI should be at or near one (1), meaning that the percentage of money spent and time elapsed are roughly equal. In cases where it is either significantly greater or less than one, the Program Manager should discuss the reasons and potential corrective action with the PMO and the Program Team. It is important to review the CPI of sub-grantees through their financial reports in the same way and to discuss causes and necessary adjustments with the partner if the CPI is too far from 1. Many more options for correcting budget variances exist when they are caught early in the program as opposed to at the end, so regular cost control is very important. A CPI that is too high or too low can be a useful indicator of program progress.

Every three months, at a minimum, quarterly budget projections should also be prepared and analyzed by the Program Manager with support from the Finance Manager. These are an expanded version of Budget vs. Actual Reports, in that they add a forecast column to the most recent Budget vs. Actual Report to predict total program expenditures against the original budget. All outstanding financial commitments and plans for operational and program expenses should be incorporated into the forecast. The office's Procurement Master List and all existing activity budgets should be considered in the forecast. At this time, if forecasts project over-expenditure or under-expenditure, corrective action is required.

Track and Carry Out Supply Chain Requirements

The PWP should include a procurement plan with the roles and responsibilities clearly defining who is responsible and accountable for each major supply chain transaction required to implement the program, including members of the Program Team, Logistics/ Procurement and the Finance Department. During the Program Implementation phase, the Program Manager and other stakeholders must ensure that these procurement transactions, sub-grants, and contracts are executed as per program requirements, the Program Schedule, donor regulations, the Mercy Corps Sub-Grant Manual and Mercy Corps' procurement and financial policies. Joint supply chain planning workshops and coordination meetings with all relevant stakeholders should be held regularly throughout implementation. The Procurement Master List can be a useful tool upon which to structure communications and monitoring of progress.

Mentor and Monitor Program Partner(s)

The PWP with roles and responsibilities should clearly define the deliverables and delineation between Mercy Corps and its partners. It is critical during the Program Implementation phase, that the Program Manager track the requirements and deliverables of these partners against documented requirements. This can be done during coordination meetings, through the M&E plan and via Quality Assurance checks. To the extent possible, the nature of the partnership and its relationship to program scope should be clarified during the Program Identification and Design phase, however, during implementation iterative and detailed collaborative planning workshops may need to occur regularly as more information becomes available. Further guidance for M&E with partners can be found in Mercy Corps' Local Partnerships Guide.

Track Program Risk

During the Set Up and Planning phase a risk assessment and analysis, followed by recommended risk mitigation measures, will be developed for some programs. During the Program Implementation phase, the Program Manager and PMO should ensure that risk reduction measures are being followed, and should track the risk environment to inform any necessary adjustments or course corrections. A risk register could be a useful tool for this process.

5.4. Manage Program Human Resources

Acquire and Orient Program Team

Depending on the status of the portfolio prior to the Program Implementation phase of a given program, the Program Team may or may not already be in place. Many team members may be acquired throughout the life of a program. If the Program Team is not already in place, the following must be carried out at the beginning of the Program Implementation phase: re-assess staffing needs (initial needs should have been determined during planning), based

on program objectives and tasks; create or update Position Descriptions for each team member; and, recruit the Program Team. For all of these processes, steps outlined in the *Field Administration Manual*⁶⁶ should be followed, supplemented by Human Resources policies at the country portfolio and headquarters levels. Hiring the right staff to meet the program needs is a critical factor for the success of your program. For this reason, extra care should be taken to ensure that staff not only meet the experience and technical requirements of the job but also fit the culture you aim to build within your team. Most programs will benefit from team members who are pro-active communicators, are motivated by the program objectives and agency mission, are positive influences on their peers, are proactive at resolving issues, are open and collaborative and respectful of the backgrounds, beliefs and the roles of other stakeholders. Recruitment should incorporate strategies for assessing the most important skills and attributes required.

Consider what type of program team will best be able to reach and work with stakeholders in a culturally appropriate manner. For example, a project aiming to increase access to potable water for communities in Sudan would benefit from at least one female community member who can easily reach the Sudanese women who are the main water managers and users. This will positively impact both the quality and usefulness of the project.

It is important that all Program Team members have access to information and share a common vision and understanding of the program. A lack of information can lead to poor performance or time and energy being spent on activities outside the program or operational scope. As well, team members who are not well informed and included in information dissemination from the beginning and throughout implementation may feel disenfranchised from the team and experience lower levels of motivation and commitment.

Once recruited, Program Team members should be oriented to Mercy Corps and country program culture, strategies, and operating procedures; and take part in a program-specific orientation. ***As a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps, the Program Team must receive copies of, and be oriented on: Proposal and Logical Framework; PWP; Kick-Off Meeting minutes and relevant parts of the Program Budget and Grant Agreement. Program Team must be oriented on administration and finance procedures (FAM-Field Administration Manual, FFM-Field Finance Manual, FPM-Field Procurement Manual, and in-country policies), and roles & responsibilities for contractors and partners.*** When large numbers of staff are hired at the same time, a workshop to provide an overview of the program and related documents can be an effective way of orienting new team members to the program. A standardized introduction to the program should be developed when staff will be hired over an extended period to ensure all staff receive a full program orientation.

Conduct Team Member Training Needs Assessment

Based on the required skills identified during Set Up and Planning, a team Training Needs Assessment should be conducted by the Program Manager. The findings of this assessment form the basis for facilitating the provision of training and mentoring to enhance team member skills. The Training Needs Assessment also helps to demonstrate the Program Manager's and the agency's genuine interest in the staff's professional development and desire for them to succeed. Mercy Corps values the learning and teaching capacities of all staff, so Program Managers are encouraged to identify opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and mentoring and for fostering a culture of learning and teaching as everyone's responsibility. Please see [Annex 9](#) for a recommended Program Team Training Needs Assessment format. For each position on the Program Team, this format identifies skills required, existing, needed skills, and the means and timeframe of skill acquisition recommended. Even the most qualified team members will benefit from focused and intentional professional development planning.

As a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps, the Program Team is recruited; roles, responsibilities, and required skills are articulated; Position Descriptions Exist; and a Training Needs Assessment must be carried out.

⁶⁶ Field Administration Manual: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/FieldAdministrationManual.pdf>

⁶⁷ Gender Programming at Mercy Corps: Findings from the Global Gender Assessment, see page 3: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/2010GenderAssessmentSummary.pdf>

Conduct Team Member Training and Mentoring

Once the needed skills and follow-up actions required are identified using a Team Member Training Needs Assessment, the Program Manager should coordinate – or should designate a Program Team member to coordinate – training and mentoring as required over the recommended time frame to augment in the Training Needs Assessment for Program Team members. As a reminder, it will always be difficult to implement a successful program if the team members do not have the required skills, so the importance of this step should not be underestimated. Whenever team members can teach other team members a sense of cooperation and peer learning is created, which can be beneficial to the performance and development of the team.

Assess Team Member Performance

Performance Management is an on-going process involving communication, documentation and discussion throughout the year and is not limited to the formal annual evaluation. A probationary or annual evaluation formally documents, in summary form, discussions during the review period (see Field Administration Manual for more information on performance management at Mercy Corps). **As a Minimum Standard, Performance of all Program Team members must be formally assessed and documented at the following intervals: a) At the 3-month mark of any new program; and, b) annually thereafter,** as per Mercy Corps' Performance Management Tools (see Office in a Box for formats). Note that the three-month review period of Program Team members on new programs is important because it allows risks and strengths within the Program Team to be realized early, and adjustments to be made accordingly, which can increase the likelihood of program success. The Program Manager is accountable for performance management of all Program Team members, whereas the PMO is accountable for performance management of the Program Manager.

Handover During Transition in Program Manager or Program Team

In the event that a Program Manager or key program team member leaves the program during the Program Implementation phase, the new Program Manager or key program team member must receive orientation in Mercy Corps and country level strategies and policies. As well, the handover should include orientation in the PWP, the Program Organizational Chart, the status of program team skills-building and performance management, key information on strategies and technical aspects of the program and cross-cutting themes, and key program progress indicators such as the latest budget vs. actual report, the latest CPI calculation, the latest budget forecast, the latest updated Program Schedule, the proposal and logical framework, results of quality assurance checks and M&E results and any specific donor and/or reporting requirements. Equally important is to prepare for anticipated and unanticipated leaves of key staff by ensuring that substitutes have been identified and oriented to carry forward work during these periods.

5.5. Managing Issues

What is an “Issue”?

In program management global standards, the term “issue” generally refers to a risk that has been realized and is affecting the staff or program. However, it may also refer to other events or problems that require corrective or mitigation actions to address large variations against schedule or budget. PMD Pro refers to issues as unresolved decisions, situations or problems that will significantly impact the project. Issues can arise from within the program team or from external actors.

Timely Escalation of Issue to Program Manager

During implementation, the program team must be sure to raise any issues to the Program Manager as soon as possible, which will allow the Program Manager to discuss the issue with the program team and the PMO and make any necessary adjustments. Delays in informing the Program Manager about issues will negatively affect Program Implementation. It is recommended that the Program Manager maintain an issue log and actively use the issue log in team meetings and in meetings and communications with the PMO to track and communicate the status of issues and their impact upon the program (see A Guide to the PMD Pro section on Managing Issues for additional information)

In some cases, staff will not want to discuss issues with the Program Manager, so it is the responsibility of the Program Manager to be in-tune with team dynamics and find subtle, sensitive ways to understand the situation. Issues

may arise from internal competition that creates negative dynamics. By being a pro-active manager that engages and listens to staff concerns and cultivates a positive work environment, these issues can often be mitigated.

During the Kick-Off Meeting it is important to set the culture of the team to be one of bringing issues into the open, emphasizing that it is then they can be worked on. Issues are brought to light not to place blame, but to move forward in a corrective manner. Developing this type of trust within a team is a key part of the Program Manager's work.

Define and Carry Out Corrective or Mitigation Actions

In the event that an issue is escalated to the Program Manager, the Program Manager should lead a process to define and carry out any corrective or mitigation actions required to address the issue. These actions should be clarified to the program team, external stakeholders, and the PMO, and should then be implemented.

Update PWP Based on Issue and Corrective Actions

It will generally be necessary to update the PWP (at a minimum, the Program Schedule and perhaps the budget) to reflect new tasks that have been or will be implemented to correct or mitigate issues. New corrective or mitigation tasks should be added to the Program Schedule, and a new Schedule should be circulated to stakeholders.

Update Relevant “Deliverables” Based on Issue

Issues that have arisen may have implications for “deliverables” developed earlier. The entire program should be reviewed so that any deliverable impacted by an issue that has arisen will be updated so as to avoid a repetition of the issue as similarly affected deliverables (outputs) are created.

Change Management

At times a program is faced with an issue that requires a significant change in the program. These are issues that are so large they reset the basic program assumptions, impacting and significantly changing the schedule, budget, and/or program final outcomes. When this occurs it is critical to follow an agreed upon “Change Management” process which involves the program team's agreement on the best course of action, impacts and modifications of all planning tools (PWP) and documentation (schedules, budgets, procurements plans, etc), and approval by stakeholders and required personnel including PMO, Country Director and potentially donors if necessary.

5.6. Managing Organizational (Portfolio) Capacities

Assess Program Operational Infrastructure (assets, vehicles, facilities, technical, etc.) vs. Requirements

The program operational infrastructure may be beyond the immediate control of the Program Manager and thus likely a risk which should be tracked. Building on the support and operations requirements determined in the Set Up and Planning phase and later discussed in the Program Kick-Off Meeting, portfolio management and the PMO should assess program operational infrastructure needs versus the actual infrastructure. Here “operational infrastructure” refers to practical operating needs such as office facilities and equipment, information and communications technology (ICT) equipment and requirements, program technical or security equipment, vehicles, and other support needs.

Based on the program needs, the PMO and Portfolio Management should assist the Program Manager to augment operational infrastructure as required and as the Program Budget or portfolio budgets permit. In some cases, budgets will not support needed upgrades, and in these cases the Program Team will need to adjust plans.

Assess Organizational Procedures (HR, procurement, security, sub-granting) vs. Requirements

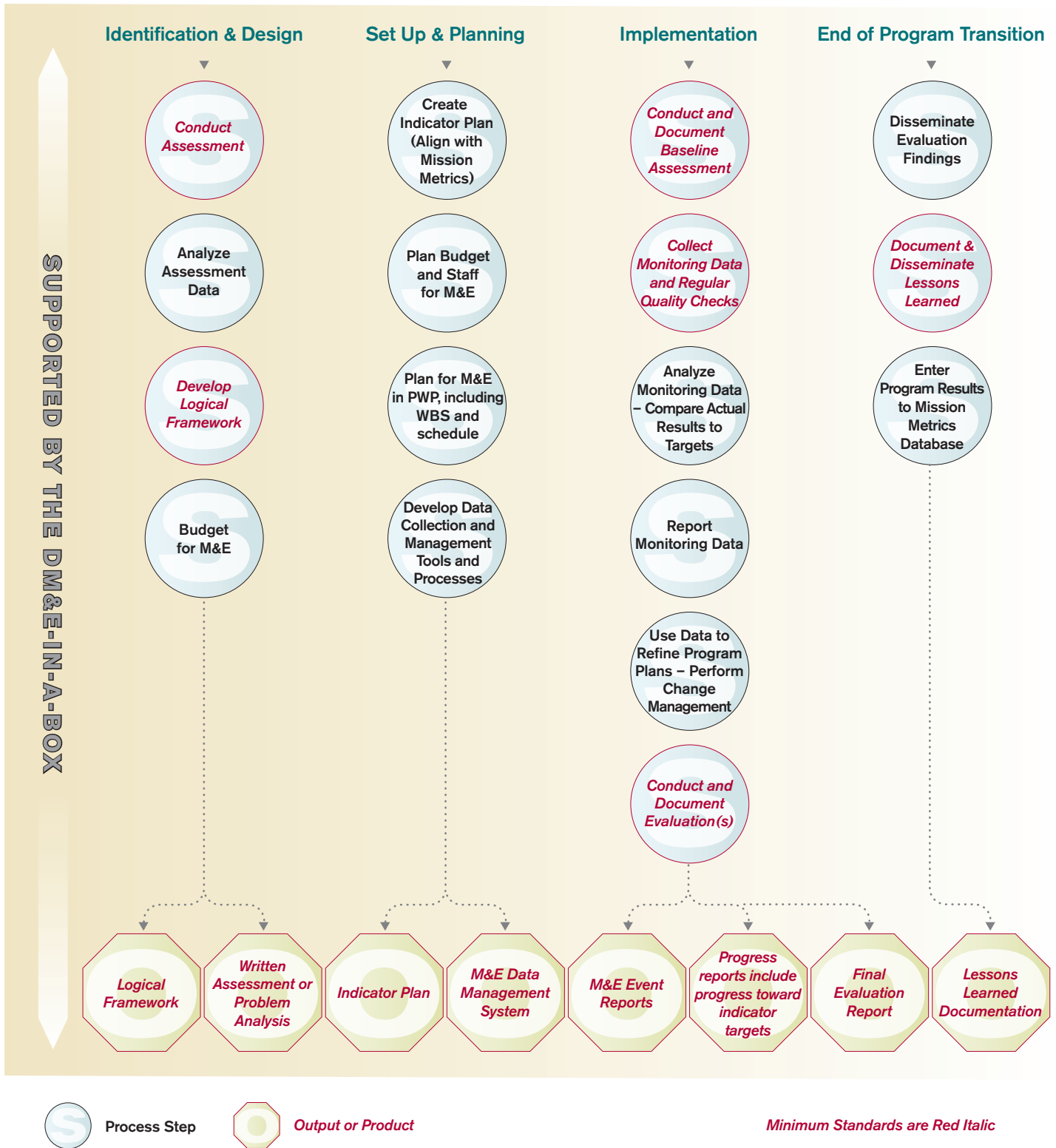
The PMO and Portfolio Management should assess organizational procedures (such as human resource management, procurement, warehousing, security, and sub-granting) to ensure that they are adequate for the demands of a particular program. In most cases, existing Mercy Corps organizational procedures should be sufficient for the program in question, but certain programs will require upgrades. For example, a program operating in a new complex security environment may require improved security protocols; or, a program requiring particularly large implementation partnerships may require adjustments in sub-granting procedures. If improvements in existing procedures are required, the PMO and portfolio management should assist the Program Manager in making the necessary upgrades to organizational procedures.

Create Strategic Alliances (Internal, External)

Partnerships are often identified and developed during the Program Identification and Design and the Set Up and Planning phases. However, in some cases, programmatic success can be supported by additional internal or external alliances that are beyond the immediate control of the Program Manager. For example, a strategic alliance with a host country government agricultural research station may greatly improve the probability of success for a food security program; or, a partnership with a colleague international humanitarian relief and development agency may assist an emergency response and recovery effort. Similarly, internal alliances (with other programs, or with neighboring portfolios, or with other departments) may be required to ensure program success. In these cases, it is the role of the PMO and Portfolio Management to assist the Program Manager in creating the necessary strategic alliances. Mercy Corps' Local Partnerships Guide can be a useful tool for establishing and fostering strategic alliances with local civil society, government and business entities.

Chapter 6: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring & Evaluation



Minimum Standards for Program Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):

- Indicator Plan exists (Planning Phase) (see [6.3](#))
- Key program M&E events (at a minimum, baseline, end-line, and routine monitoring) have been carried out, and reports of these events exist (Implementation Phase)(see [6.3](#) & [6.4](#))
- Basic M&E data management system exists (Implementation Phase) (see [6.4](#))
- Evaluation report exists (Implementation Phase) (see [6.4](#))

About This Chapter

The Monitoring and Evaluation process works together with all phases of the Program Lifecycle. Processes compare program performance to the original proposal, as well as to the Program Work Plan and Indicator Plan.

This chapter describes the key program management steps included in program monitoring & evaluation. While much of M&E is specific to the technical sector in question, there are certain program management processes that can help to ensure good articulation of programmatic results. These are described below, divided into the following categories: [6.1](#)) Introduction to M&E at Mercy Corps; [6.2](#)) M&E in Program Design; [6.3](#)) M&E at Program Set Up and Planning; and, [6.4](#)) M&E at Program Implementation.

6.1. Introduction to M&E at Mercy Corps

Value of M&E

Why invest in strong M&E? Experiences confirm that programs investing significantly in M&E can benefit from:

- increased program quality and management capacity;
- ability to make informed adjustments;
- motivation and transparency for staff and partners;
- increased leverage with donors and greater prospects for expansion; and
- local buy-in and sustainability.⁶⁸

Linkages with M&E Chapter in A Guide to the PMD Pro

The A Guide to the PMD Pro provides an excellent orientation to M&E within the context of program management. Mercy Corps' M&E approaches are mostly consistent with PMD Pro, with a few caveats:

- Mercy Corps views Monitoring and Evaluation as distinct activities, with distinct sets of tools, methods and best practices for each. The sub-sections in this chapter reflect this distinction.
- As referenced in [Chapter 3](#) of this manual, the Mercy Corps logframe format and terminology is slightly different from PMD Pro. Data source information is captured in the Mercy Corps indicator plan, which is similar to the M&E plan in PMD Pro terminology.
- Mercy Corps believes that program objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) and include quantitative targets where possible. Indicators should be direction-neutral and not include the targets directly in them.

Mercy Corps' Key Steps to Effective M&E

- Budget for M&E.
- Staff for M&E.
- Incorporate M&E in project workplan.
- Conduct DM&E workshop at project start-up.
- Develop an indicator plan.
- Develop data collection and management processes.
- Conduct regular meetings to reflect on data.
- Make the logframe a living document.
- Report results to beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- Conduct baselines and final evaluations for all projects.

68 M&E Value Proposition: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/Developing%20Value%20Proposition%20ME.pdf>

This manual complements the PMD Pro chapter by providing additional details on how to implement M&E, including guidance and tools for M&E planning and monitoring and evaluating programs, in the Mercy Corps context.

Resources Available

Key sets of resources to assist managers and staff in conducting M&E in the field include:

- *DM&E Guidebook*⁶⁹ and associated [online training](#)⁷⁰ for basic DM&E concepts, tools and terminology. [DM&E Guidebook Supplement](#)⁷¹ for more technical detail and guidance on planning and data collection methods. Hard-copy versions are available upon request.
- [DM&E-in-a-Box](#)⁷²: comprehensive set of tools to assist with all things DM&E developed by and for practitioners as a proven resource for carrying out DM&E activities in the field.
- [DM&E Community of Practice on Clearspace](#)⁷³: Web-based platform for sharing experiences and example tools with M&E-interested staff from around the Mercy Corps world.
- [DM&E webinars](#): Live, interactive sessions in a virtual classroom for shared learning.
- [DM&E TSU and Help-desk](#): Email dme@mercycorps.org for specific technical support.

6.2. M&E in Program Design

Planning for effective M&E begins in the Program Identification and Design phase by incorporating SMART objectives and well thought-out indicators into the program logframe. This is also the time to utilize the Mission Metrics Training and Indicator Guide to ensure alignment of indicators with Mercy Corps' Mission Metrics and inclusion of Mission Metrics reporting in the schedule. Please see Section 2, Chapter 1 in the *A Guide to the PMD Pro* and [Chapter 3](#) of this manual for more on designing projects with measurable results.

Budgeting and Structuring for M&E

Strong monitoring systems and evaluations require appropriate resource allocations. It is important to have clear M&E roles and responsibilities for staff and partners. Having one or more staff exclusively focused on M&E, especially in larger programs, is recommended. Even smaller programs can have staff with explicit M&E responsibilities built into their Position Descriptions, serving as M&E focal points in addition to their other duties. This should be taken into account when planning Program Human Resources and Budgets.

Many Mercy Corps countries choose to staff a country portfolio-level DM&E Unit consisting of M&E specialists to provide technical assistance across projects and work with program-level M&E staff or focal points⁷⁴. This has proven effective in developing greater coordination and harmonization of approaches, and can be funded by allocating percentages from each program. A clear role for IT staff in M&E is also recommended to support data management solutions.

Please see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 on Budget Draft and Preparation for further guidance.

6.3. M&E at Program Set Up and Planning

Integrating M&E into start-up workshops allows us to better define and internalize program objectives, and position our M&E systems to measure progress towards these objectives. This collective planning should occur as part of the program design ([Chapter 3](#)) and the creation of the Work Breakdown Structure ([Chapter 4](#)) and should be presented to the full Program Team at the kickoff workshop covered in [Chapter 5](#). The text box at right summarizes major M&E items to address; please see the DM&E at Project Kickoff tip sheet for more detail.⁷⁵

69 *DM&E Guidebook*: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DM-E%20FINAL%20Guidebook%203final.pdf>

70 DM&E Online Orientation Training on MC Online Learning Center: <http://elearn.mercycorps.org/>

71 *DM&E Guidebook Supplement*: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DMEGuidebookSupplementPart1.pdf>

72 DM&E-in-a-Box toolkit: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=p&p=dme>

73 DM&E community of practice space on Clearspace: <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/community/cops/dme>

74 DM&E Tip Sheet #10: Structuring the DM&E Unit: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DME%20Tip%2010%20Structuring%20DME%20Unit.pdf>

75 DM&E Tip Sheet #7: DM&E at Project Kickoff: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DME%20Tip%20Sheet%207%20Project%20Kickoff.pdf>

M&E Workshop at Start-up:

- Update and internalize team understanding of logframe
- Review or develop indicator plan with roles and responsibilities
- Insert M&E activities in workplan
- Plan for baseline study
- Develop data collection and management tools and processes

Indicator Plan

The Indicator Plan provides the basic details of a functional M&E system, and is therefore a critical tool in the M&E planning process. ***The indicator plan is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.*** It is referred to as the M&E Plan in A Guide to the PMD Pro, with slightly different format and terminology to the Mercy Corps format but is essentially the same information. For example, in PMD Pro format, “Outcomes” = “Objectives” and “Info Needed” is similar to “Definition and Utility of Indicator”. USAID often refers to Performance Monitoring Plans, or PMPs, which are also very similar in substance to Indicator Plans. When completing the Indicator Plan, Mission Metrics alignment and scheduling should be entered into the Mission Metrics system.

Mercy Corps Indicator Plan Template and Sample:

Objective: 75% of mothers aware of at least two pregnancy-related danger signs					
Indicator	Definition of Indicator and Management Utility	Baseline Data and Targets	Data Collection Sources & Methods	Frequency of Data Collection	Person Responsible
1. % of mothers aware of at least two pregnancy-related danger signs	Mothers can list two of the four danger signs defined by PEPC Program Guidelines. Recall of danger signs is key to awareness and prevention	Targets: - 50% by month 12 - 75% by project end Baseline: Less than 22% (according to assessment data, to be confirmed by baseline survey)	1. Baseline Survey / Final Survey of mothers	1. Month 2,12, 24	1. Surveys Designed by Maternal Health Officer 2. Carried Out By Maternal Health Assistants

Tips for developing indicator plans (please see DM&E at Program Kickoff tip sheet within the DM&E Toolkit for more) include:

- In the Definition of the Indicator column, make clear the unit of analysis we are interested in (i.e., individual, household, association, etc.) and any key sub-groups.
- Data collection sources refer to the primary data source – for example, farmer association members, or pregnant mothers. Methods can include sampling strategy as well as methods of inquiry (e.g., survey, focus group, case study, etc.).
- The Frequency column helps define monitoring versus evaluation. Be wary of high frequencies for activities that take effort to collect, like surveys, and try to standardize so that multiple indicators are rolled into the same data collection activities and reports.
- Include detailed Roles and Responsibilities and/or write out in narrative so it is clear who is responsible when data is collected, inputted, analyzed, reported on and disseminated.
- Proactively include partners and beneficiaries, and adjust contracts or MOUs as needed.
- Consider budgetary and time implications of tracking each indicator.
- Note it is a live document that should be adjusted and updated throughout the life of the program.

All Monitoring and Evaluation tools should disaggregate information by both gender and age. This will allow program teams a better understanding of who their activities are reaching and how the impact of those activities may vary based on these factors. Collecting this information during routine monitoring and key M&E events can allow program teams to adjust activities in order to increase access to resources and/or participation if necessary.

Baseline Study

A solid baseline study provides the basis by which results can be measured at the end of the program. Baselines are especially important for outcome indicators – i.e., those which measure objectives and entail changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and conditions. The indicator plan should include clarity on what will be measured and the methods required.

Baseline data should be collected on indicators before the activities relevant to those indicators have begun, and thus baselines are usually conducted in the early part of the Program Implementation phase. Sometimes a phased approach is appropriate, with different waves of baseline data collection for specific target groups prior to the start of their activities. For further guidance on planning and implementing the baseline study, see DM&E Tip Sheet #5: Baselines⁷⁶. **Please note that the methodology and results of the baseline study should be documented in a Baseline Study Report, which is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

6.4. M&E at Program Implementation

Introduction to Program Monitoring

Mercy Corps defines program monitoring as a cycle of regularly collecting, reviewing, reporting and acting on information about Program Implementation. This is congruent with *A Guide to the PMD Pro*, which covers basic monitoring concepts. The Mercy Corps *DM&E Guidebook* and training also provide a good introduction to monitoring. See DM&E Tip Sheet #12: Developing a Monitoring System for more detail on the steps in text box⁷⁷. **Note that carrying out and reporting on routine Program Monitoring is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.**

Data Collection for Monitoring

Data collection for monitoring generally focuses on key activity and output indicators needed to chart progress, fulfill reporting requirements and address other management information needs. Be wary of trying to collect too much information, as this can overburden staff and systems. Also be sure to coordinate with logistics and administration to harmonize and limit duplication.

Data collection tools, or monitoring tools, needed for the monitoring system can be mapped out by looking at the data sources and frequencies columns in the program indicator plan. Mercy

⁷⁶ DM&E Tip Sheet #5: Baselines: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/DM&E%20Tip%20Sheet%202012%20Devel>

⁷⁷ DM&E Tip Sheet #12: Developing a Monitoring System: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DME%20Tip%20Sheet%202012%20Devel%20a%20Monitoring%20System.pdf>

Considerations for Data Management Solutions

- What are our key data needs and uses?
- What are the major components or desired features of the system? Consider data integration and compatibility, quantity and organization of data, data transfer, adaptability, analysis and reporting tools, etc.
- What are our main constraints? Includes budget, time, technology, staff capacity, etc.
- Analyzing software options: MS Excel vs. MS Access; other data management software
- Setting up the process: Identifying data flows; team approach to system design; training staff; defining roles and responsibilities.

Corps has developed templates for tracking common activities such as trainings and small projects in the field, which can be adapted to fit a wide range of activities and project contexts⁷⁸⁻⁷⁹. Examples of sector-based monitoring tools are in DM&E-in-a-Box and on Clearspace.

78 DM&E Data Collection Template for Trainings/Events/Field Activities: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DMEDataCollectionTemplateTrainingsEvents.doc>

79 DM&E Data Collection Template for Small Projects: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/docs/DMEDataCollectionTemplateSmallProjects.doc>

Data Management Systems for Monitoring

Program data management and filing systems aim to maintain an accurate, timely information base concerning the program's activities and outputs and their associated documentation⁸⁰. Mercy Corps' systems and technologies for managing data range from the basic, such as simple Excel tools, to the sophisticated, including use of online databases and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping.

It is important to design systems that are secure, accessible, and reflect the level of staff capacity and overall technology environment. Clarify the process or data flow for the system before jumping ahead to the technology or software solution.

Mercy Corps has several resources for assisting field programs with management of monitoring data. This includes a tip sheet on M&E data management⁸¹, example Excel tools⁸², an M&E database template in Microsoft Access that can be adapted to various program contexts⁸³, and examples and experiences of programs using various technologies on Clearspace. This is a very fluid area with tools and technologies developing rapidly, so it is good to check-in with the DM&E and Information Technology (IT) teams for updates, questions or assistance in developing M&E database systems. ***Development and use of at least a basic M&E data management system is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.***

Analysis and Reporting of Monitoring Data

Conducting regular, participatory data analysis sessions with staff and partners to analyze monitoring data, assess progress as related to targets, and make any necessary adjustments to implementation strategies is the key to an effective monitoring system. Building a placeholder for these meetings in the Program Work Plan (PWP, see Chapter 4) and on the agenda of routine program coordination meetings is important. For tips on organizing and presenting data for effective analysis, please see DM&E Tip Sheet #11: Data Analysis⁸⁴. For tips on reporting of monitoring information, please see Chapter 5 and the guide referenced there.

Program Evaluation

Mercy Corps defines evaluation as an in-depth, retrospective analysis of an aspect or aspects of a program that occurs at a single point in time. This is in line with the framing of evaluation in *A Guide to the PMD Pro*. More background introduction to evaluation is in the *DM&E Guidebook*.

Mid-term and final evaluations are the most common types.

- Mid-term evaluations are used to 1) measure the effectiveness of the program and 2) determine changes to improve effectiveness for the remainder of the program. They're generally only relevant for programs of at least 2 years duration.
- Final evaluations in the NGO world generally take place in the final months of a program. These evaluations are generally designed to 1) measure the effects and impact of a program and 2) draw conclusions about lessons- learned for future programs.

Other evaluative efforts include field studies and action research, designed to evaluate particular program elements in-depth, as well as impact evaluation. Impact evaluations are generally more relevant to untested approaches, pilots, and particularly innovative or high-profile initiatives. These efforts are most effective when planned and budgeted at program design.

⁸⁰ Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)

⁸¹ DM&E Tip Sheet #8: Data Management: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/Docs/DME%20Tip%20Sheet%208%20Data%20Mgmt%20EN.pdf>

⁸² Example Excel Data Management Tool: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=DME+Example+Tool+Excel+Data+Solution>

⁸³ M&E Database Template in Access: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=DME+Monitoring+Database+Template>

⁸⁴ DM&E Tip Sheet #11: Data Analysis: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/Docs/DME%20Tip%20Sheet%2011%20Data%20Analysis.pdf>

Steps to Develop a Monitoring System

1. Clarify the management structure
2. Review & refine the project logframe
3. Identify key management questions
4. Develop the indicator plan – what, how, when, who?
5. Assess the means, costs and risks of the monitoring system
6. Identify the required data collection tools
7. Develop data collection tools & data management systems
8. Integrate M&E activities into workplan
9. Map out the M&E System

Evaluations can be internal or external, depending on donor requirements, available funding, internal capacity levels, objectives of the evaluation and other circumstances. Within Mercy Corps, we generally refer to an external evaluation as led by an expert external to the agency, usually a private consultant. Staff and partners, however, often assist the external consultant in data collection and analysis, both for logistical reasons as well as to maximize learning⁸⁵. Donors often require final evaluations to be external, while mid-term evaluations are often led by the program team due to budget reasons and the focus on learning for the next phase.

Within Mercy Corps, evaluations can be conducted whenever portfolio management sees fit. Final evaluations are often donor required, while mid-term evaluations are often program initiated with the focus on learning for the next phase. Mid-term evaluations are recommended for programs lasting two years or more. **The Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps stipulates that final program evaluations must be carried out and a report must be available.** These evaluations can be very simple for smaller or less complex programs (for example, a documented end-line study report only), or can be more detailed for larger or more complex programs (for example, an external impact and process evaluation). The type of evaluation conducted is at the discretion of the PMO.

Evaluation Planning and Scope of Work

Effective evaluation planning begins in the Program Set Up and Planning phase ([Chapter 4](#)), with appropriate budgeting and staffing for M&E and allocation of time in the PWP. More detailed evaluation planning should begin several months in advance of actual data collection to allow time for consultant contracting, organization of evaluation team, logistics planning, etc.

The Scope of Work (SoW) is the central reference document containing these planning details, and is the first step in organizing an evaluation. See the Baseline/ Evaluation Scope of Work Template and Sample for a detailed guide to producing a solid SoW⁸⁶. Note that Terms of Reference (or ToR) is often used interchangeably with SoW, but technically a ToR refers to a specific consultant's contract, whereas the SoW can include broader planning for the full scope of the evaluation, including externally and internally-led elements.

For external evaluations, managers should negotiate with consultants for agreed upon methods and timetables, and provide feedback on draft reports. Mercy Corps has a roster of external evaluation consultants, many with Mercy Corps experience⁸⁷. The DM&E team can also help organize Temporary Duty (TDY) assignments for experts within the DM&E Community of Practice to help with field work, and is available to help review draft SoWs, sampling strategies, data collection tools, reports and other types of technical assistance.

Mercy Corps Evaluation Checklist

- Focused on utility; designed to measure indicators and answer management needs.
- Start with clear Scope of Work.
- Primarily a learning tool rather than an audit.
- Employ mix of quantitative and qualitative methods and use robust sampling techniques.
- Adequately resourced and planned in advance.
- Team participation in implementation and review of results.
- Draft completed and discussed with staff while evaluation team still in country.
- Short but informative - usually no more than 20 pages plus attachments.
- Findings shared, presented and discussed across programs for maximum learning.

Evaluation Scope of Work Contents

1. The Project or Program to be Evaluated
2. Purpose of the Baseline or Evaluation
3. Background
4. Existing Project/Program Information Sources
5. Key Baseline or Evaluation Questions
6. Data Collection Methods, including Sampling Techniques and Data Management/Analysis
7. Team Composition and Participation
8. Procedures: Schedule and Logistics
9. Reporting and Dissemination Requirements
10. Budget

⁸⁵ USAID Evaluation Policy has different definition of external evaluation: <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/>

⁸⁶ Baseline/Evaluation Scope of Work Template and Sample: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/Docs/Baseline%20Evaluation%20SOW%20Template%20Sample.doc>

⁸⁷ Mercy Corps M&E Consultant Roster: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=consultant+roster>

Data Collection Methods for Evaluation

Mercy Corps promotes a mix of quantitative (yielding numeric results) and qualitative (more open-ended, often text-based results) methods to capture intended and unintended outcomes.

To inform the approach it is necessary to first review the program indicators and key questions in the SoW, and employ methods that best capture this information. For measuring changes in indicators from baseline or mid-term, try to replicate the data collection tools and sampling strategy as closely as possible. More detailed guidance on data collection techniques is in the *DM&E Guidebook Supplement*⁸⁸. DM&E Tip Sheet #3: Sampling provides more detailed guidance and links for sampling⁸⁹.

Evaluation Reporting, Dissemination and Learning

Evaluation reports should be clear and concise, with an executive summary that can serve as a stand-alone document. For external evaluations, the program team should provide feedback on the report draft before it is finalized by the consultant. A recommended evaluation report structure is included in the Baseline/Evaluation SoW Template referenced previously.

Making effective use of evaluations, for organizational learning and evolving program approaches, is an often overlooked aspect of evaluation. Workshops should be held with staff and partners to review evaluations and analyze how the findings and recommendations relate to current and future programs and strategies within the country program. This can include staff from other programs in order to maximize cross-learning and collective institutional knowledge-building. After submitting to donor, final evaluation reports are sent to the relevant Program Officer at HQ and placed on the Digital Library. They should also be distributed to local and international stakeholders.

See [Chapter 7](#) of this manual for more on lesson-learning at project close-out. The text box at right includes other actions for building agency-wide learning from evaluation.

Common Data Collection Methods:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Review of monitoring data
- Observations
- Case studies
- Document/secondary data review
- Structured & semi-structured Interviews
- Participatory Impact Assessment
- Community and social mapping
- Most Significant Change
- Field visits and tours/transect walk

Maximizing Organizational Learning from Evaluations:

- Organize analysis and lessons learned workshop and consider relevant action items for future implementation
- Include outcome data in Mission Metrics reporting
- Submit to HQ Program Officer and load on Digital Library
- Contact DM&E team for results in Globe⁹⁰, Hub⁹¹ and GAIT
- Consider presenting on global webinar sessions

88 *DM&E Guidebook Supplement*: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/doc/DMEGuidebookSupplementPart1.pdf>

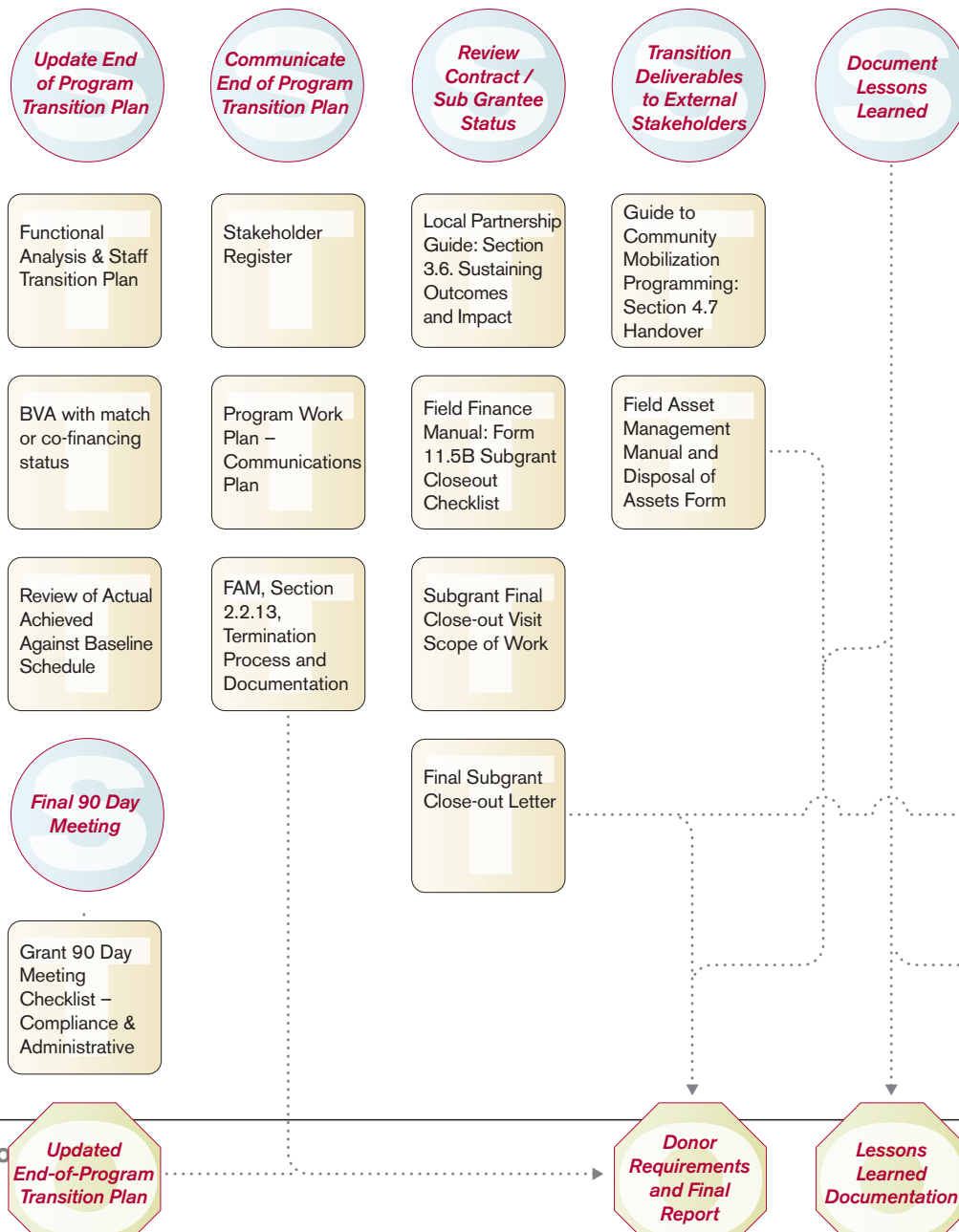
89 DM&E Tip Sheet #3: Sampling: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&c=progdev&h=dt&t=0&q=dme+tip+3+sampling>

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Chapter 7: End-of-Program Transition

End of Program Transition



Minimum Standards for the End-of-Program Transition Phase:

- Written End-of-Program Transition Plan exists (see [7.2](#))
- “Final 90 day” meeting has taken place, and minutes exist (see [7.2](#))
- Contract/ sub-grantee status reviewed and finalization plans specified (see [7.2](#))
- Deliverables to be transitioned to external stakeholders have been handed over, and handover documentation exists (see [7.2](#))
- Lessons learned have been documented, and have been sent to the Program Officer(s) and TSU (see [7.2](#))
- End-of-Program Transition has been clearly communicated to the Program Team, beneficiaries, host government counterparts, and partners (see [7.2](#))
- Program File is complete (see [7.2](#))
- Final report is completed and donor close-out requirements are met (see [7.3](#))

About This Chapter

The End-of-Program Transition phase is the final phase of a program. Although some aspects of this phase are considered in the Set Up and Planning phase, and are further elaborated during the Program Implementation phase, the End-of-Program Transition is essentially a linear phase that occurs after or towards the end of, Program Implementation. It is the phase in which the Program Team exits the program, transitions program deliverables to external stakeholders, or transitions program processes and learning into the next relevant Mercy Corps program.

This chapter describes the key program management steps during the End of Program Transition phase. These are described below, divided into the following categories: [7.1](#)) Types of Program Transitions; [7.2](#)) Updating and Communicating End-of-Program Transition Plan; and, [7.3](#)) Donor Requirements.

7.1. Types of Program Transitions

Per PMD Pro, there are four types of end of program transitions:

- **Termination** – Specific source of program funding ends, and the program will not continue, either via direct follow-on funding from the same source, other external funding sources or through program generated funding. Some program activities may continue after termination, but the activities will be managed and supported by the beneficiaries or other external stakeholders, not by Mercy Corps.
- **Extension** – Program period is extended, and source of funding continues. However, no additional funding is provided. Generally called a “No Cost Extension” or NCE.
- **Expansion** - Program period is extended, and additional funds are provided by the donor or other donors. Includes a continuation of some, or most of the program activities, and may add additional activities or geographic areas. Generally called a “Cost Expansion” or “Cost Extension”.
- **Redesign** – Reevaluation or internal realignment. Continuation via a new phase with modified interventions or activities, or via different funding sources.

Extensions, Expansion and Redesign are functionally the equivalent of starting a new program, and the program management processes and phases should be followed from the beginning, as applicable.

7.2. Updating and Communicating the End-of-Program Transition Plan

The first step in executing the end of program transition is to review and update the End of Program Transition plan that was created in the Set Up and Planning phase and iterated or refined in the Program Implementation phase. There is no particular format for this plan, but it should describe both the administrative close-out processes and the programmatic transitional processes required. **A written End-of-Program Transition Plan is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.** This review process should take place no later than 90 days prior to the end date of the program.

A transition planning meeting or “final 90 days meeting,” is required as a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps. Please see the Grant 90 Day Meeting Checklist⁹² as one source of information for the administrative and grant compliance related contents of this meeting. The minutes from this meeting must be documented and placed in the Program File.

This meeting considers two things:

Administrative Close-Out: All tasks must be completed, expenses recorded, assets disposed of, reporting requirements fulfilled, documents organized, and contracts and sub-grants closed out, and any Mercy Corps matching or co-financing requirements verified. Plans should be made for completion of final reporting requirements. It is important to consider staff care and be sensitive to and supportive of follow-on employment planning of staff as part of the transition process. Usually administrative close-out is happening as Program Team is leaving and moving to other programs. Thus it's critical to plan ahead for this date leaving enough time to ensure proper closure of the program. Staff will likely be looking for work prior to the end of the program, often leaving before fully completing their duties and consequently losing important institutional knowledge. Initiating open discussions with staff to identify their intentions and build the 90 day plan around their timeline can help to avoid surprise losses of staff. At times, it may be necessary to provide incentives to key staff to stay through the end of the program.

Programmatic Transition: The programmatic deliverables must be ‘transitioned’ to external stakeholders. Depending on the program, these might be partners, local government, or beneficiary groups. Hand-over documentation must be prepared; program transitions and accomplishments must be communicated to stakeholders; any training or processes required for sustainability must be finalized; program M&E processes must be finalized; and, lessons learned must be documented and disseminated. While all of these are important, the most important aspect of programmatic transition is to have and communicate a clear and realistic exit strategy, so that the incremental benefits achieved by the program can be continued by external stakeholders after the end of program transition. To be effective, these processes should be initiated during the course of implementation.

Specific steps in this process are discussed below:

Review Status of the Program Scope

Reviewing the status of the program means analyzing progress made towards achieving the program objectives and updating program management documents. Update documents in the PWP and other program documentation to detail program accomplishments to date against key objectives, activities and indicator targets. If program benefits and deliverables are not going to be achieved, provide a detailed explanation as to why not. Physically verify outputs and quality, as described in [Chapter 5](#).

Based on achievements to date, and remaining planned activities, determine if program objectives will be achieved. If program objectives likely will not be achieved, determine if a request for change of scope should be sent to the donor, or if a no-cost extension (NCE) should be requested (NCE assumes adequate funds remain for both program and program support requirements for the duration of the extension). The decision to request a NCE or to request a change of scope is a decision gate requiring the approval of the RPD.

Financial and Operational

The Finance Manager should provide a current Budget vs Actual (BVA) financial report, as described in cost control procedures in [Chapter 5](#). Starting with the BVA and working with the Finance Manager and PMO, prepare a Budget Forecast for remainder of grant period. Using this forecast, determine if the program is projected to be within donor budget flexibility limits. If not, determine next steps (alignment request to donor, internal budget changes, etc). Ensure program expenses are up-to-date; including follow-up on outstanding advances and commitments.

The Finance Manager should provide a current match or co-financing report, if applicable. Determine if match or co-financing requirements will be achieved. If it appears the match commitments are not going to be reached, HQ Programs and Finance must be notified.

⁹² Grant 90 Days Meeting Checklist: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?a=q&r=1&hs=1&t=0&c=all&h=dt&q=Grant+90+Days>

If it is determined at the 90 day meeting or before that funds are expected to be unspent at the end of the grant period, they cannot be expended in a manner that is not in direct support of the achievement of the program activities. Donor regulations require that expenses charged to a grant provide a reasonable benefit to the grant. If equipment is to be purchased in the pre-close out period, a written justification detailing why the equipment is required for the program and the benefit the program will receive from the equipment is prepared and signed by Portfolio Management. If supplies and materials are purchased, they must be utilized before the end of the grant. Donors and auditors give extra scrutiny to the pre-closeout period to ensure that inappropriate expenditures are not charged to the grant.

The warehouse inventory records should be reviewed and a list of items purchased with grant funds is prepared. Inventory needs to be utilized before the end of the grant period, as most donors require reimbursement for the cost of unused inventory at the end of the grant period.

Program Team

Transition strategies for Program Team members should be determined, together with the PMO and Human Resources (HR). The PMO must determine which program personnel will be terminated and which will be retained and transitioned to other projects, programs, or roles. HR should review local labor law regarding period of notice requirements and begin preparing end of service notifications as required for staff that are not being retained. Staff often will begin to look for other employment as the end of program transition approaches, potentially affecting the program's completion. In these instances, it is advisable for the PMO to work with HR to determine a strategy for retaining staff until the end of program (shift to other programs, eligibility for severance, bonuses, etc). For staff that will not be retained after the end of the program, follow the termination process in *Field Administration Manual 2.2.13* and the requirements of local labor law.

When faced with program closure and staff downsizing, a functional analysis can be a useful exercise to ensure all important tasks for ongoing operations are assigned to remaining staff and separation of duties is maintained.

The final months of a program can be a very stressful time for the program team. In addition to pressures to effectively meet program objectives and finish the program on target, uncertainties around employment continuity may magnify stress. Fear of not finding follow on work and pressure to spend time seeking their next opportunity may be affecting the concentration and focus of team members. Program Managers should be aware of these concerns and discuss end of program staff transitions with staff. Smoothing the transition for the team should be a topic within the 90 day meeting and Program Managers should consider providing training or support in CV development and interviewing skills as well as allowing for staff time off for job seeking and interviews during the close out period. The Program Manager may also serve as an effective advocate for high performing team members to help them find follow on work internally with another program or department.

Formal Partnerships

In the final 90 days, review partner accomplishments to date, ensuring that they have created and transitioned the expected program deliverables, that the quality of deliverables meets standards, and that all necessary reports and supporting documentation have been provided. Clearly communicate the end of program transition strategy to partners, and ensure that they are working on both administrative close-out and programmatic transition. Most importantly, ensure that they understand the End-of-Program Transition strategy. Ensure that roles and responsibilities for end of program transition are clear, and that partners are communicating the same thing to external stakeholders as Mercy Corps team members – sometimes a local partner communicating an End-of-Program Transition strategy differently from Mercy Corps team members can be a source of confusion. Ensure partners have contracted, or are in the process of contracting or conducting, any audits and/or M&E events as per the sub-grant agreement or as required by the donor. Schedule financial close-out work with the sub-grantees as per the requirements outlined in FFM 11⁹³ In the final 90 days, **contract and sub-grantee status must be reviewed and finalization plans specified as a Minimum Standard per Program Management at Mercy Corps**. Local Partnerships Guide, Section 3.6. Sustaining Outcomes and Impact, is a useful resource for transition or exit planning with partners.

⁹³ Section 11 of the Field Finance Manual for sub-grant management was under development at the release of this manual. These resources are expected to be released in 2012.

Transition of Deliverables

During the Program Implementation phase, descriptions of deliverables are developed, quality assurance checks are conducted, and outputs are physically verified (see [Chapter 5](#)). During the end of program transition phase, ensure that handover documentation of these deliverables to external stakeholders (beneficiaries, host country government, partner, etc.) is prepared, that deliverables are transitioned to these stakeholders, and that planned operations, maintenance, and sustainability measures are implemented. In some cases, additional training or orientation on operations, maintenance, or sustainability measures may be required to ensure a higher probability of post-program use of deliverables and post-program realization of benefits⁹⁴. ***It is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps that deliverables be transitioned to external stakeholders and that handover documentation exists within the Program File.***

M&E and Lessons Learned Documentation

As per Monitoring and Evaluation phase requirements (see [Chapter 6](#)), a final program evaluation should be conducted as a minimum standard. Based on the evaluation and other M&E events, program accomplishments and lessons learned should be documented and disseminated. In addition to formal evaluative activities, it is often helpful to compile lessons learned through a participatory workshop of the program team and other stakeholders to ensure consideration of a range of experiences with the program. ***Internally, it is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps that these lessons learned be documented and sent both to the Senior Program Officer of the region in question, as well as to relevant Technical Support Unit members.***

Communicating End-of-Program Transition Plan to Stakeholders

It is critical that the End-of-Program Transition Plan be communicated to stakeholders early in the program and actively re-communicated during the final 90 days. Failure to do this will almost always result in future misrepresentation of the program's strategies and accomplishments. ***Clear communication of the End-of-Program Transition Plan to the Program Team, beneficiaries, host government counterparts and partners is a Minimum Standard of Program Management at Mercy Corps.***

Beneficiaries: Communicate deliverables, the transition of deliverables, M&E results, and other results to beneficiaries as a key aspect of accountability to beneficiaries. Request beneficiary feedback on programmatic processes and impact, and incorporate this feedback into lessons learned documentation. Clearly manage beneficiary expectations regarding the termination or extension of the program. Plan to celebrate program accomplishments, which may require the involvement of community leaders or the media.

Host Country Government: Inform local governing authorities of the end of the program; describe the program transition strategy, and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders within this strategy. Ask host country government counterparts for feedback, and incorporate this feedback into lessons learned documentation.

Program File

Ensure that all relevant program documentation is complete, and filed in the Program File as per the guidance in [Chapter 4](#). Ensure that there is a mechanism for retaining this documentation for the required time period (generally 3-7 years) after the completion of the program. Confirm with headquarters that all required documentation exists at the headquarters level as well. A complete Program File is a Minimum Standard for Program Management at Mercy Corps.

⁹⁴ Mercy Corps' Guide to Community Mobilization Programming, Section 4.7, Handover, provides useful guidance for concluding work with communities.

Annex 1: Stakeholder Register Template

Use Stakeholder Register to determine the best interactions for various stakeholders

1. For each significant stakeholder identify basic characteristics about them.
2. Identify what their interest is in the project and how they will be affected by it (good & bad).
3. Identify the stakeholder's capacity and motivation to help or hurt the project.
4. Identify plans for how to address stakeholder's interests and motivations (public meetings, private interviews, communication, discussion, involvement on a committee, capacity building, etc.)
5. Modify this template by deleting irrelevant columns and adding others that might be useful for your project
6. As needed, consider additional registers for each program phase or project within your program scope.

Program Stakeholder Register (template)						
Project Name:				Date last Updated:		
Project Phase:						
Name of Stakeholder	Designation	Contact Information	Role in Program	Requirements & Expectations	Communications Strategy (What communication? How? How often? When?)	Influence on Program Outcome

Stakeholders are persons or organizations whether in the public, private or civil sector, whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by Mercy Corps' decisions, actions and ensuing results. Stakeholders can be both internal and external to Mercy Corps. Examples of stakeholders include: Mercy Corps team members, community groups, households, donors, the private sector, host country government, media, partners, and colleague agencies. In a program context, stakeholders are persons or organizations that are actively involved in the program and whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by the performance or completion of the program. Stakeholders may have very different interests, capacity and influence based on gender and power relationships in the community. Each program stage and sub-project may include unique stakeholders and it is the responsibility of the Program Manager and PMO to identify the stakeholders, communicate their anticipated level of participation and/or responsibility and manage expectations.

Annex 2: Is / Is Not Matrix Example

When specifying the program scope, an “Is/ Is Not Matrix” may help various stakeholders understand what the program is and is not designed to do. An example of an Is / Is Not Matrix follows:

Is / Is Not Matrix Example for Multiple-Clinic Scope	
IS/Includes	IS NOT
Six new buildings (list locations)	Does not include building in “named” location
Four buildings rehabilitated (list locations)	Does not include HIV medicines (use other grant)
Includes medicines for pre-natal health care	Does not include care for infants over five years of age including family members
Includes equipment for pre-natal health care	
Includes training of clinic staff	

Annex 3: Tip Sheet: Creating a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)

The WBS is a hierarchical tree used to organize the activities of a program into related tasks. A program is divided into projects or components, and these are then divided into sub-projects or sub-components, and then into tasks or work packages, which is the lowest level of work. The work package feeds into various levels of summary tasks and activities that eventually support the project objectives.

There can be many task levels depending on the complexity of the program. Some programs may need as few as three layers in the WBS. Others may require ten or more layers, or require a separate WBS for each sub-project. The steps to create a WBS include:

• **Step 1: Start at the Top and Move Down**

A good starting point is the key outputs and major activities identified in the program's Logical Framework (see Chapters 3 and 6). The WBS should directly tie into completion of the key outputs. This is an opportune time to review the Logical Framework, since in many cases the team involved in creating the WBS may be different from those who created the Logical Framework. At first, to create the WBS tree don't worry about organization, just start brainstorming tasks. Starting with your program goal, ask, "What must be completed to deliver the program successfully?"

Brainstorm with the group and list all of the named tasks; then repeat this process with the objectives, outputs, and major activity areas, until the tasks are broken down into work packages and cannot be broken down any further.

Don't forget to include tasks for delivery of items required to enable M&E or quality assurance. Tasks could include initial delivery of descriptions of a deliverable and then eventually final delivery of a deliverable, such as:

- Training agendas, materials, and facilitators' notes for trainings
- Design drawings and Bill of Quantities for infrastructure
- Scope of Work or Terms of Reference for technical consultancies
- Approach and process documentation (for example, a community mobilization process, or nutrition rehabilitation process, or a farmers' capacity building process)

• **Step 2: Organizing the WBS**

After brainstorming summary activities, tasks, and work packages, organize them into a logical structure for the program. At this point the WBS starts to take on the hierarchical tree shape: the few objectives or outcomes at the top and the multiple deliverables or work packages spread as roots at the bottom.

• **Step 3: Assigning Owners**

At this time, it's helpful to identify the owner of each task. This is the person (or position) who is responsible for ensuring the delivery of a specific work package to the program. They may need a team to help them complete the lower level tasks or a specific work package, but ultimately they are responsible for delivery of the work package.



Tip: Tasks are best written in the form "Action Word" + Subject. In this way they state the "action" that must be completed on "something". It provides a short, easy to read, identifiable work package of something that is "delivered". Example: 'Conduct assessment of health posts.'

Example: Hierarchical Structure of Tasks for an Indicative Nutrition, Hygiene and Sanitation Awareness Campaign Component of a Health Program

1. Assess current community nutrition, hygiene and sanitation practices
 - 1.1. Design survey
 - 1.2. Field test survey
 - 1.3. Select enumerators
 - 1.4. Train enumerators
 - 1.5. Conduct survey
 - 1.6. Analyze data
2. Assess gaps between current practices and recommended Essential Nutrition Actions and Essential Hygiene and Sanitation Actions
 - 2.1. Contract technical specialists
 - 2.2. Draft essential actions
 - 2.3. Compare community assessment results to recommended actions, identify gaps
 - 2.4. Based on gaps, create key messages
 - 2.5. Contract IEC materials artist
 - 2.6. Design IEC material based on key messages
 - 2.7. Contract Printer
 - 2.8. Print IEC materials

The owner may be the Program Manager, a member of the core Program Team, an external contractor or partner, or a resource not yet identified. For example, to develop training materials for health workers in a prenatal health project you might need an Obstetrician to complete several tasks. You would identify those tasks as owned by “Obstetrician”. And you would need an additional task “Contract One Obstetrician” owned by “Maternal Health Officer”.



Tip: Facilitation of WBS Creation

An easy way to facilitate a team through creation of a WBS is to have individual team members brainstorm tasks onto medium-sized Post-Its.

1. Write the project objectives and key outcomes so that everyone on the team can see them.
2. Ask team members to write down their functional tasks in support of the project objectives and key outcomes. Add suggested owners. One task per Post-It.
3. Ask team members to think of what tasks they need to have performed by others before they can do their own tasks. Have them write the tasks down with the owners identified. These are the resources they expect to go to for these deliverables. One task or deliverable per Post-It.
4. Once the brainstorming slows down collect the tasks and start grouping them according to the organizational structure agreed to by the team. Move tasks around or if they fall under multiple groupings mark that in some way.
5. Go through the “final check” activities. Many times tasks will be overlapping or duplicates from different team members. Be sure to get agreement of how to separate tasks or which tasks to use with identified task owners.
6. Now that you have Post-Its in a tree, you'll want to document this structure. Typically you'll be transferring this into software such as MS Project. However first Code your structure through the following:
 - a. At the first level of the tree number your categories by hundreds, 100, 200, 300, etc.
 - b. At the next level, usually summary activities, number using tens, 110, 120, 130, etc.
 - c. At the next level, usually tasks and work packages, number using ones, 111, 112, 113, etc.
 - d. Adjust as needed.

• **Step 4: Final Check**

Once you have the full WBS drafted, review the following to determine if the WBS is complete:

1. Start at the top of the WBS and work your way down. Are there any activities or tasks that are not connected? Did the team miss a connection or is the task out of scope? Does every task support an objective, output, activity area, or support need?
2. Start at the bottom of the WBS and go up. Do all work packages, tasks, summary activities support an objective, output, activity area, or support need? If not, why is it there?
3. Are all work packages worded in the form “Action Word” + Subject? Is it clear what it means for the work package to be “complete”? Do you need completion criteria to the work package? Or do you need additional tasks (or check-points) such as “Checklist Approved,” “Contractor Work Approved,” “Complete project reviews.”
4. Does every work package have an identified an owner or required resource? Do summary activities have owners?

Annex 4: Tip Sheet: Creating a Schedule

• Task Relationships

The task relationships between work packages are known as **Dependencies**. If one task must happen before another, it's said to be dependent, or "linked." This is called a **Predecessor-Successor** relationship. In scheduling the focus is typically on the predecessor; that is, the task that must be done before something else can happen.

To create a schedule it's important to know what the relationship is between two tasks. If it is **Serial**, this means that one task must finish before another can start (finish/start). If two or more tasks can be performed at the same time, they are said to be **Parallel**: the tasks either start at the same time (start/start) or finish at the same time (finish/finish).

• Milestones

Milestones are used to track major points of progress in a program while giving the Program Team smaller successes ("incremental benefits") on which to focus rather than the entire program's goal. Milestones are significant events, which mark completion of an activity or event and can be used to group major components of a program. The top levels of the WBS are a good source for milestones.

Examples of typical construction project milestones are: Design Complete, Schematics Complete, Schematics Approved, or Construction Initiated.

Notice milestones follow a different form from Tasks. Milestones are usually in the form of "Subject" + "Statement of Completion or Initiation". Example statements of the ending or starting point are: complete, delivered, signed, approved, or kick-off, start, initiate. Milestones are a single point in time. It's important to note that, unlike tasks, milestones have no time or resources associated with them.

• Critical Path

The Critical Path is the route through the program tasks which takes the shortest amount of time to complete. If a single task on the critical path is delayed, it means all the tasks behind it are delayed. There is no slack time, float, no extra days: what this means is that, unlike other tasks, delays in tasks on the critical path can delay the delivery of the entire program.

The critical path focuses the Program Team on priorities. If the choice is between doing a task on the critical path versus one that isn't, then the critical path task should be prioritized so that the program can stay on schedule. Again, it is essential to track the critical path closely during implementation to avoid overall delays to the entire program.

• Step 1: Getting Started

Begin with the WBS. The WBS contains the task list that needs to be scheduled. Instead of the WBS tree structure that flows top-to-bottom, you will now turn it on its side, creating a timeline format moving from left to right.

Whether you start from the end and work towards the beginning of the program, or the other way around, is a matter of preference. But the simplest place to begin is with a box (Post-it) labeled "Program Start" and end with a box labeled "Program End". Now it's a question of where all the other tasks fit in between. Identify major program milestones and spread them out in rough order between Program Start and End. Taking tasks from the WBS, place the summary activities in between the milestones where they make sense chronologically. Continue, again in rough order with the subtasks, down to the work package level. You may now enter the WBS into scheduling software, such as MS Project.

Finish/Start Relationship



Start/Start Relationship



Finish/Finish Relationship



- **Step 2: Establish Dependency Relationships Between Tasks**

Above was a simple exercise to get tasks in roughly the right order on a timeline. This is followed by the more exacting work of determining the dependency relationships. To do this, ask the following questions about each task:

- What other tasks must be completed before this one can be started?
- What task follows this one or can't be started until this task is complete?
- What tasks can take place in parallel with this one; the tasks can be worked on at the same time as this?

- **Step 3: Review the Schedule Dependencies**

Once you think you have the task dependency relationship identified, it's a good idea to review the logic of your dependencies one last time. Starting either at the program end and moving backwards, or at the program start and moving forwards, take a look at each task and draw connections to ask the following questions:

- Is this task a predecessor or successor to each of its connected tasks?
- Are there some predecessors that aren't really required? Can the tasks be done at the same time or not; in parallel rather than in serial?
- Do all the tasks connect and flow to support the project end (and the objectives represented by the completion)?
- Are all of the tasks necessary? Are there duplicates or overlaps?
- Are all the necessary tasks shown? Do you need to add a task to make logical sense?
- Can tasks be split into smaller pieces so that it changes the dependency, allowing some work to be done in parallel and some in serial?

- **Step 4: Estimate Work Package Duration**

You have now created what's known as a Network Diagram, a diagram of the relationship between all the tasks¹. But to create a schedule, time needs to be associated with each of the work packages. This comes through estimating how long it takes to complete or deliver on a work package (in hours, days, or weeks). This is called the duration of the task.

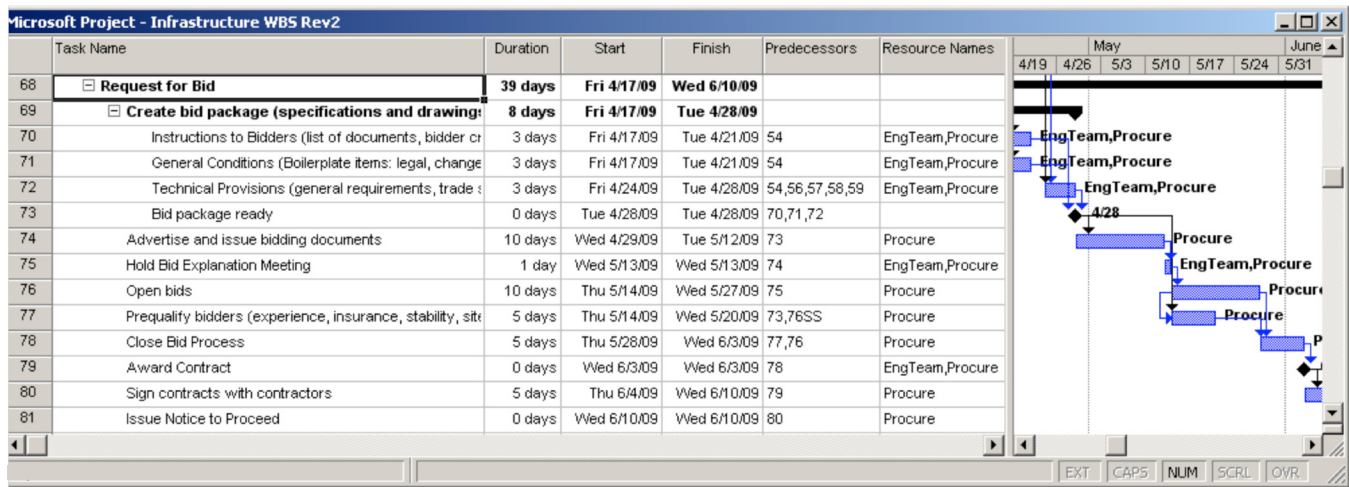
Task duration is a best guess, based on the resources you expect to have, the number of work hours in a day, and the number of work days in a program month (after incorporating holidays and other non-work days). Add notes to your tasks to indicate any assumptions your team makes as it creates the durations. Later you may want to run scenarios modifying those assumptions.

When estimating durations, use the information you have from your team, people who will actually do the work, experts, or refer to previous program experiences. Estimate duration at the work package level only. These durations will be summed to create calculated durations at the summary activity level and up to the final project schedule. Once the durations are estimated, add them to the work packages in the software.

Similar to creating the WBS, it's common to ask at what level of detail the duration should be tracked at (hours, days, weeks or months). Just as in the WBS, there is no "right" answer, but it is preferable if the owner of each work package plays a leading role in estimating the duration required for that work package. The "right" level of detail is associated with the potential risk of the task and how long it will take to complete the task. The higher the risk or the longer the duration of a single task, the more likely the task should be broken down into smaller duration tasks. In this way a high risk or long duration task can be tracked for progress in several small steps. The smaller steps have the advantage of alerting the Program Team to problems earlier than if one large task is used. For example in the figure below, the team could represent the tender process as a 39 day process, or by showing the detail below, they can track who is responsible for which tender components and if the tender process starts to slip they can determine the impact.

¹ Sample Network Diagrams can be found within A Guide to PMD Pro.

Sample WBS / Schedule for a Tender Process



• Step 5: Calculating Schedule

For anything but the smallest programs, project management software such as **Microsoft Project** is a life saver. The project management software automatically:

- **Creates the schedule.** MS Project automatically creates the schedule (with the team’s task, relationship and duration inputs), calculating start and stop dates, and critical path.
- **Simplifies reporting.** As the program begins, with progress data from the team (“actual start dates” for work package, “actual end dates” for work packages, etc.), the software automatically calculates the program and milestone percentages complete.
- **Recalculates dates.** As task owners report progress, the software calculates the effect of late or early completed tasks, changing due dates and critical path. With a quick look, the Program Manager or PMO can determine the status and priorities of the program.

Annex 5: Tip Sheet: Risk Management

The risk management planning process generally follows four steps:

- **Step 1: Identify Risks through Team Brainstorming**

Program risks can be internal and external. Internal include lack of resources or budget to accomplish the defined project, or lack of expertise. External can be stakeholder based, geography, weather, language, etc. Risks can be identified by making use of people who have done similar programs elsewhere, have worked in-country previously and understand the specific challenges, and through lessons learned from other programs. Assumptions which may have been outlined in the Identification and Design Phase become risks during subsequent program phases.

- **Step 2: Prioritize Risks**

Have the team estimate if the probability of the risk occurring is low, medium or high. And then have the team determine the severity of impact if the risk were to occur; is it low, medium or high. In this way the risks can be prioritized and the team can choose to further research and plan for those risks that are only “high” or “medium” in some respect. It may not be worth the team’s time to review “low” severity or probability risks. However by not addressing low risks, the team is in essence accepting that risk. If the risk occurs, the team has decided they can deal with the impact at that time. It’s important not to remove the low risks from the matrix. Risk Management is an iterative process and it is important to review even low risks as the program proceeds to be sure they haven’t changed or become an indicator of a new higher risk item.

- **Step 3: Reduce Risks**

Once high and medium risks have been determined, the team can develop plans to reduce or even eliminate the risk. The idea is to determine how to reduce the probability and severity of a risk from high or medium to low or zero. For example, if through the vehicle procedures there is a check for an inflated spare tire on a vehicle, the unexpected event of having a flat tire (perhaps in some regions a high probability, and a high severity) can be reduced to low severity by having the spare.

There are different ways to respond to risks:

1. **Accept Risk** – an example is the team accepting low severity/low probability risks. If the risk occurs the team has accepted the consequences and will react when necessary.
2. **Avoid Risk** – the team can avoid a risk by not doing that part of the program, or by doing it in a different manner that avoids the risk. An example is that it may be cheaper and faster to have materials delivered directly to various building sites, however if security of materials is a risk the team may choose to take extra steps and warehouse the material first in a secure location.
3. **Transfer the risk** – a risk may be that Mercy Corps does not have the expertise or core competencies to implement a particular portion of a program. In this case to transfer the risk of not completing that portion successfully, Mercy Corps may decide to contract it out. This transfers part of risk to the contracted partner. However it introduces new risks, which Mercy Corps must track through monitoring of the partner and associated risks.
4. **Mitigate the risk and have contingency plans** – Mitigating risks simply means a way to reduce the risk. If the team isn’t able to completely avoid or transfer the risk, they may be able to decrease the probability of it occurring or the impact should it occur. If it is deemed highly probable then the team should look at contingency planning. What would the team need to do if the risk occurred? How much addition budget would be required? Would addition people, equipment, or time be needed?

- **Step 4: Develop Contingency Plans**

Many risks cannot be mitigated. But they can be planned for and contingencies or “reserves” put in place. This is the setting aside of additional funding in case a specific risk occurs. A classic example is a 10% contingency fund for a building project. The percentage will be different depending on the estimated probability of error in the budget. If inflation is great, or if the program has not been clearly defined, these are points of risks that the team will need to determine a corresponding contingency fund against during the Set Up and Planning Phase.

The Risk Analysis Matrix is a project tool that the Program Manager facilitates and tracks. It is a listing of prioritized risks that then identifies owners (the risk monitors), trigger events (indicates a risk is occurring), the potential impact, and the mitigation plan which may include contingency plans (money, resources on call, etc).

Annex 6: Example Process: Creating an Activity Budget

The following is an example of the steps to create an Activity Budget: A program activity is to hold a WASH training of trainers. The program document says that there will be trainings in three counties, and four trainings will be held per county.

Step 1: Identify Activity Parameters

- a. Develop SOW for the training and identify total duration of the training activities.
- b. Identify whether the trainer will be an internal staff member or consultant.
- c. Identify the requirements for the training location.
- d. Identify beneficiaries. How will they get to the training? Where will they stay if they are going to be overnight?
- e. Identify materials requirements for the training.
- f. Identify if snacks and meals will be provided.

Step 2: Identify Cost Categories

- a. If consultant, what costs will be covered by the activity budget? (i.e. Will you need to pay daily rate? Keep in mind this may include preparation time along with time to give the actual training. Do you need to pay for consultant travel, per diem and lodging?)
- b. If the training is held in a hotel the program will need to pay for the conference room rental. The budget may also need to pay for tea breaks and lunch.
- c. What costs will be required to get the beneficiaries to the training venue? Will the beneficiaries need lodging? Per diems?
- d. Any costs related to creating and/or supplying the training materials? What costs are necessary to print and bind the training materials?

Step 3: Estimate Quantities

- a. How many trainers/consultants and how many days/hours of service are required?
- b. How many beneficiaries?
- c. How many beneficiaries are local, and will not need transportation, lodging and per diems. How many beneficiaries are not local?
- d. How many meals and snacks will be provided?
- e. How many days will lodging or room rental be required?

Step 4: Estimate costs

- a. What is the average daily rate for a consultant in this area (check rates paid previously for similar activities)?
- b. What are conference venue rates? What are the lodging rates?
- c. How much should beneficiary travel cost? Per diems?
- d. What are material printing costs?

Step 5: Roll Up Costs into a Detailed Activity Budget

- a. Use spreadsheet or an existing budget template to show units, unit costs and totals.
- b. Compare to available budget and adjust plans as necessary.
- c. Ensure approval as required by your program and the FFM.
- d. Ensure activity budget is included in program budget forecasting.

Annex 7: Sample Kick-Off Meeting Agenda

Program Name
Portfolio

Participants:

- Portfolio management representative (Country Director, or HQ management)
- PMO representative (Director of Programs, or HQ Head of Department)
- Program Manager
- Program Team
- Senior Operations team members (Finance & Compliance, Logistics/ Procurement, HR/ Administration)
- Key external stakeholders (Partner team leaders, etc.).

Handouts: Proposal and Logical Framework; PWP (at a minimum, Program Schedule and relevant parts of Program Budget); Program Charter (if it exists); M&E Plan

Agenda:

Sample WBS / Schedule for a Tender Process
Session 1: [insert time slot]
Goal, Objectives and Basic Parameters (time, cost, scope) of the Program, and its relationship to the overall Portfolio
Session 2: [insert time slot]
Review of Lessons Learned from Previous Similar Mercy Corps programming, if any
Session 3: [insert time slot]
Review of Cross-Cutting Themes and their Integration into the Program
Session 4: [insert time slot]
Presentation of approved Program Work Plan [reviewing, at a minimum, relevant parts of the schedule, budget, and stakeholder register (recommended for complex programs)]
Session 5: [insert time slot]
Discussion of Tasks on the Critical Path
Session 6: [insert time slot]
Presentation of Program Charter <i>[if applicable – not all programs will have a Charter]</i>
Session 7: [insert time slot]
Discussion of Program Support Needs (finance, logistics, administration) and Schedules
Session 8: [insert time slot]
Presentation of Program Reporting (financial, narrative), Compliance (financial, operational, programmatic), and Communication (internal, external) Requirements
Session 9: [insert time slot]
Presentation of Program Monitoring & Evaluation Requirements

Annex 8: Sample Baseline Schedule Tracking Sheet

Program Name
Portfolio

Note: List all tasks or only those tasks that have been identified as on the Critical Path during the Set Up & Planning Phase

	Task	Responsible (R); Accountable (A)	Dependent On [from PWP]	Planned Start [from PWP]	Planned Finish [from PWP]	Actual Start [from PWP]	Interim Review	Actual Finish [from PWP]	Corrective Actions Required
1	Design Irrigation Canal (sample only)	Project Engineer (R); PM (A)	-	10 March 2011	09 April 2011	15 March 2011	31 March 2011	11 April 2011	
2	Carry Out Irrigation Canal Feasibility Study	Same	Task 1	10 April 2011	27 April 2011	12 April 2011	20 April 2011	27 April 2011	Accelerate by two days due to late completion of design
3	Contract Irrigation Canal Skilled Labor	Procurement Officer, PM (R); PM and DoP (A)	Task 1 & 2	1 May 2011	15 May 2011	1 May 2011	7 May 2011	20 May 2011	
4	Mobilize Supplementary Community Labor	Project Officers (R); PM (A)	Task 1	10 April 2011	15 May 2011	12 April 2011	1 May 2011	15 May 2011	Accelerate by two days due to late completion of design
5	Construct Irrigation Canal	Contractors, Community Project Engineer/ Officers (R); PM (A)	Tasks 1, 2, 3, and 4	16 May 2011	15 September 2011	21 May 2011	15 July 2011	15 September 2011	Accelerate by five days due to late completion of contracting

Annex 9: Program Team Training Needs Assessment Format

Program Name				
Portfolio				
Position	Skills Required	Existing Skills [from interview & observation]	Skills Needed	Means of Skill Acquisition Recommended (Time-frame)
Program Engineer (sample only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design of moderately complex irrigation projects - Feasibility studies of potential irrigation projects - On-site supervision of construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good infrastructure design experience, but limited experience with irrigation - Good feasibility study experience, but limited hydrology experience - Low on-site construction supervision experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More exposure to irrigation system design concepts - More exposure to hydrological concepts - More exposure to best practices in construction supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-directed reading of irrigation and hydrology texts (3 months) - Meeting with Department of Hydrology counterparts (2 months) - Training on construction supervision (6 months)
Program Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilize community user group - Train community user group on internal management and irrigation operations & maintenance - Monitor activities of community user group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderate mobilization experience - Good training experience, but no O&M experience - Good monitoring experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More mobilization skills - Better understanding of O&M for community-managed infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender-sensitive, conflict-sensitive community mobilization training (2 months) - Training on O&M for community-managed infrastructure (6 months)

Annex 10: Program File Contents Checklist

Identification & Design

- 1. Assessments (see Minimum Standards checklist)
 - a. Written assessment or problem analysis (can be included in proposal document or can be a separate assessment document)
- 2. External stakeholders list
 - a. List of external stakeholders (with contact information) participating in initial consultations
 - b. Community selection written rationale
 - c. Partner identification written rationale
- 3. Proposal or Preliminary Scope Statement
 - a. Final submission approved by donor
 - b. Logical Framework
 - c. Summary Budget
- 4. Documentation of the review of lessons learned and best practices

Set Up And Planning

- 1. Agreements
 - a. Final signed program agreement with donor
 - b. Agreements of Understanding – communities/partners/government (Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), letters of support, etc.)
 - c. Modifications and amendments to program agreement
 - d. Official communications with donors, including requests (NCE, key personnel, waivers, etc.) and approvals
- 2. Work Plan (see Minimum Standards checklist)
 - a. Key program parameters, coming from preliminary program documents
 - b. Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)
 - c. Program Schedule
 - d. Coded program budget
 - e. End of Program transition plan

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Implementation

- 1. Meeting Minutes
 - a. Kick-Off Meeting minutes
 - b. Program Team Coordination Meeting Minutes (quarterly)
 - c. External stakeholder meeting minutes
- 2. Reporting
 - a. Program reports submitted to donor (interim, annual and final)
 - b. Internal Program Progress reports
 - i. Means of verification such as beneficiary lists, attendance sheets, survey data, etc.
 - c. Updates to Program Work Plan
 - d. Issues Log (recommended)
 - e. Risk Register (recommended)
- 3. Sub-grants (see sub-grant manual and Grant File for more info)
 - a. Approved proposal and coded budget
 - b. Sub-grant agreement
 - c. Memorandum of Understanding
 - d. Program reports (interim, annual and final)
- 4. Deliverables
 - a. Descriptions of Deliverables (Documentation of planning)
 - b. Verification of execution / proof of assistance received
 - c. Reports of quality assurance checks
- 5. Human Resources
 - a. Organizational chart (Personnel and Job Files are retained with HR)
 - b. Consultants
 - i. Consultant agreement
 - ii. Scope of Work
 - iii. Final deliverables / output
 - c. Training Needs Assessment

Monitoring & Evaluation

- 1. Indicator Plan / Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)
 - a. Deviations formally documented and plan updated
- 2. M&E Event Reports (baseline, endline, and routine monitoring)
- 3. Evaluation Report (mid-term and final)
- 4. M&E Data Management System Reports
- 5. M&E Data Sources disaggregated by sex and age
 - a. Surveys
 - b. Beneficiary lists – activity, location, names, etc
 - c. Attendance sheets – trainings, meetings, etc
 - d. Pre- and post- tests from trainings
 - e. Routine monitoring reports (projects & sub-grants)

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End-of-Program Transition

- 1. End-of-Program Transition Plan (written & approved)
 - a. Proof of communication to internal team members as well as external stakeholders
 - b. Sub-grant end of program closure documentation and formal acceptance of work performed
- 2. “Final 90 Day” Meeting Minutes
- 3. Handover report to external stakeholders
 - a. Handover of deliverables documented (includes infrastructure)
- 4. Lessons learned written document

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