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## **United States Agency for International Development**

# **PROGRAM-FUNDED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REVIEW**

## **(ADS 548R)**

**White Paper Prepared to  
Provide Information on ADS 548  
Process to USAID Missions  
24 October 2001**

USAID Information Resources Management (IRM)  
Consulting Information Services (CIS) Division

## Program-Funded Information Technology Review (ADS 548R)

Information technology (IT) is increasingly an important factor in economic development. This fact is reflected in the current reorganization within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and in several global IT initiatives at the Agency. As a result, more and more development projects involve an IT component combining many of the latest technologies available. For instance, a railroad development project may involve a satellite network that spans multiple countries and runs the latest version of Microsoft SQL server for global Web access. Subsequently, these projects have become highly visible for the reasons outlined below:

- Focus on strategic value of IT for economic development;
- Number and position of stakeholders involved;
- Potential impact on more than one country;
- Potential impact on more than one sector in a given country; and
- Significant impact on business processes in host country institutions within the business and political environment.

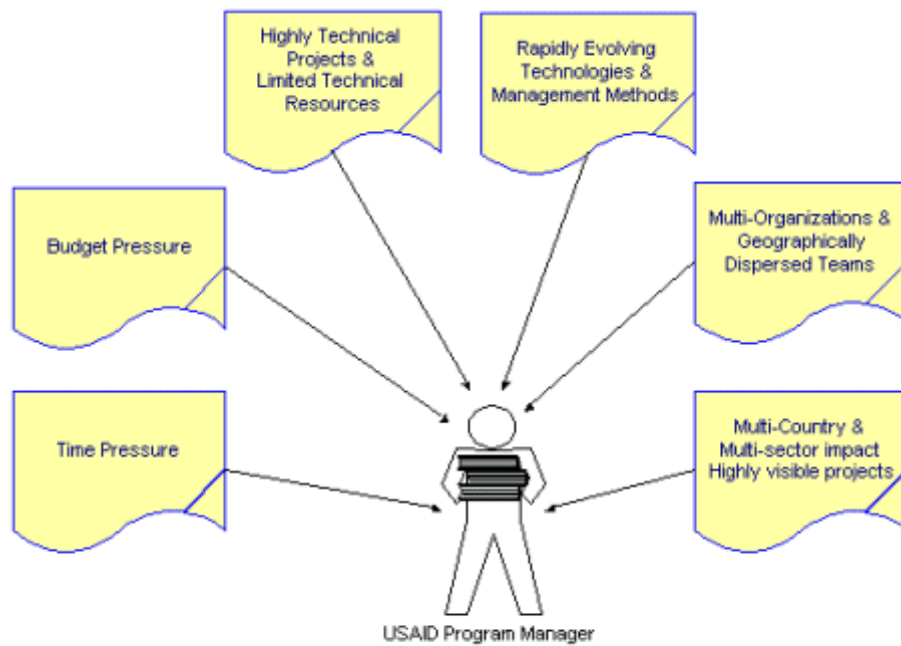
These development projects present the USAID Program Manager with new planning and implementation challenges. In addition to the regular pressures to deliver faster, cheaper, and sustainable development projects, Program Managers at USAID Missions now contend with

- Multi-organizations, geographically dispersed project teams;
- Rapidly evolving technologies; and
- Limited technical resources within the Missions to provide an impartial review of proposals submitted by contractors, thereby ensuring the implementation of projects with the most suitable technologies and IT methodology.

This combination of challenges sometimes results in late projects with cost overruns, scaled down features from the original requirement specifications, and in the worst case, project failure.

The image below illustrates the challenges faced by USAID Program Managers. At the center is the image of a Program Manager, and the challenges are represented as flags surrounding the Program Manager. These include

- Time Pressure,
- Budget Pressure,
- Highly Technical Projects and Limited Technical Resources,
- Rapidly Evolving Technologies and Management Methods,
- Multi-Organizations and Geographically Dispersed Teams,
- Multi-Country and Multi-Sector Impact, and
- Highly Visible Projects.



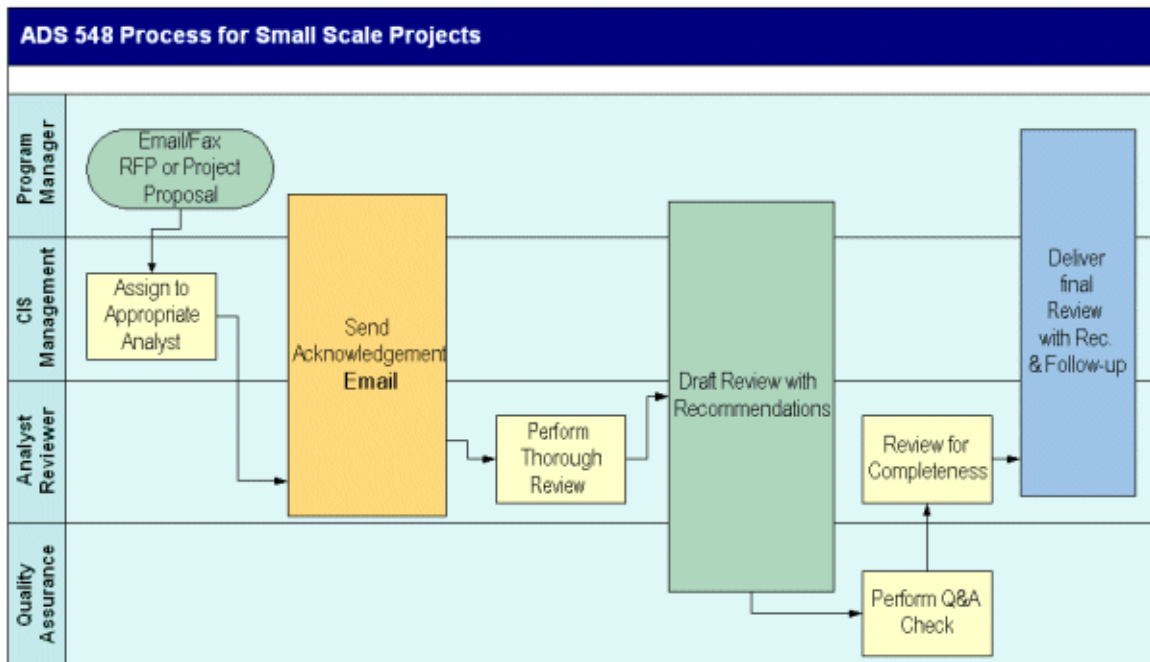
### Challenges Faced by USAID Programs Managers

## Solution Provided by ADS 548 from IRM/CIS

The ADS 548 process solves these challenges by assisting Program Managers to implement successful, effective, and efficient projects ensuring the best return on investment dollars. Per Agency mandate, ADS 548 specifies in USAID Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 548 that before any program-funded activity with an IT component of \$100,000 or more is implemented, Program Managers at USAID Missions need to submit the project proposal to Consulting Information Services (CIS) for review and approval. The proposal could include any or all of the following: IT-related procurement plan, application system scopes of work, training plan, IT needs assessment study, hardware/software specifications, software development plan, and IT-related service plans (e.g., installation, maintenance, and technical assistance).

Upon receipt of these documents, CIS performs a comprehensive review of the project in this, the critical planning phase. CIS provides feedback to enable the Program Manager to effectively plan, organize, and control the project to achieve the strategic objectives.

## Cross-Functional Flowchart of the ADS 548 Process



The chart above is titled “Cross-Functional Flowchart of the ADS 548 Process.” It describes the steps in the Program-Funded Information Technology Review process for small-scale projects as follows:

1. Program Manager sends RFP or Project Proposal to CIS Manager via e-mail or fax.
2. CIS Management assigns project to appropriate analyst.
3. Analyst sends acknowledgement of receipt of proposal to involved parties.
4. Analyst performs thorough review.
5. Analyst sends out draft review with recommendations.
6. Quality assurance staff performs Q&A check.
7. Analyst performs review for completeness.
8. Analyst delivers final review with recommendations and follow-up to involved parties.

## ADS 548 Process Methodology

CIS reviews and analyzes the following information to ensure that a reliable, scalable, and sustainable information system will be in place at the end of the project:

- Description of project goals and objectives;
- Results of any available studies recommending specific IT tools or platforms;
- Description of the host country institutions' IT infrastructure;
- System design description with a set of topological network diagrams;
- List of IT system specifications and costs for both hardware and software;
- Installation guidelines for the systems;

- Warranty and maintenance information;
- Any customized system development plan;
- Training plan;
- Project plan; and
- Measurable success factors/outcomes to assess IT transfer objectives.

The review is performed in consideration of two primary factors that can determine the success or failure of a project: (1) the business perspective and (2) the technical perspective.

## **ADS 548 Process Benefits**

The CIS review and analysis provides the following benefits to the Program Manager and Mission:

- The best return on investment with successful implementation of strategic objectives for the project and contingency planning for managing the unexpected;
- Hands-on review of the level of magnitude, level of engagement, and level of effort necessary for successful project implementation;
- Confidence that the building blocks of IT are adequately addressed: people, data, network, technology, and processes;
- Assurance that the project follows basic guidelines of software engineering techniques in cases where applications are being developed;
- Confidence the project is using the most suitable IT methodology and project management techniques;
- Recommendation of successful project best practices;
- Recommendation for best practices and repeatable solutions for sustainable projects;
- Recommendation of proven approaches that produce effective and realistic project plans;
- Early identification of potential problems and advice to mitigate project risk;
- A host of complementary services to ensure the project success and enable the Program Manager to maintain focus on key strategic and operational business decisions.

## Coordinating Services with Partners

In addition to performing the initial review of the IT component of USAID program-funded activities, CIS has a long, proven history of successful partnerships with USAID Missions, host country organizations, contractors, and consultants providing assistance to Program Managers at all the phases of the project life cycle: planning, design, procurement, development, implementation, and maintenance.

CIS, through a partnership with SETA Corporation, has available a team of experienced, highly qualified, certified network engineers, systems engineers, network architects, application developers, IT project managers, and IT strategists with international IT project development and implementation experience. This team of experts provides technical assistance to ensure that the project is being implemented on time, on track, and according to specifications. CIS also serves as a Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) to Program Managers to assist them with rapid implementation of projects, oversight of complex projects, project audit and review, and other coordinating services.



**Coordinating Consulting Services & Technical Assistance  
Provided by IRM/CIS to USAID Missions**

The radial diagram above is titled “Coordinating Consulting Services and Technical Assistance Provided by IRM/CIS to USAID Missions.”

The circle at the core of the diagram is labeled “Coordinating Consulting Services.” The surrounding circles are labeled as follows:

1. E-Government Planning and Implementation, ICT.
2. Development Experience Clearinghouse.
3. Web Site Design Hosting, Collaboration, Extranet.
4. Government Off-the-Shelf Software Repository.
5. Project Planning, Review, and Oversight.
6. Quality Assurance and Feasibility Study.
7. Large-Scale Network Architecture Planning.
8. Project Management and Implementation.

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