LASER PULSE M&E Reporting Instructions for LASER Buy-Ins

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Introduction

This document provides guidance and instruction to Principal Investigators (PIs) on how to provide monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data and other information from LASER Buy-Ins to LASER PULSE M&E personnel for ultimate reporting to USAID and usage internal to LASER. It is organized by the key tools listed below; internal bookmark links are provided to quickly jump from here to a given section:

New content will be added to this manual periodically in order to better assist Buy-In PIs with the reporting process and with regard to research translation activities. If you have any questions about reporting responsibilities or procedures, please contact frossi2@nd.edu for help.

Form 1: Project Tracker Spreadsheet

LASER provides each Buy-In with a "Project Tracker" file based upon this Google Sheets template. It is an organizational tool for the PI and LASER to curate important information about the Buy-In. In addition to tracking deliverables, this file also contains worksheets to organize personnel, research translation information, and important communications. Although LASER will initially populate some of the data, it is the responsibility of the PI to update it when important changes occur, and to make sure it is current during the bi-annual M&E data reporting periods.

Team Roster: Guidelines for Reporting Information on Buy-In Team Composition

With regard to the Buy-In Team Composition (Team Roster), the information required is a listing of the key contributors involved in the Buy-In. Information should be updated whenever a key personnel change occurs, such as the addition of a new team member – regardless, all information should be current at the time of end-of-period reporting (March 31; September 30). Note that some projects may have a slightly different format from the structure described below, but the overall intent is the same. As such, PIs should do the best they can to accurately portray the project team roster; please direct any questions to frossi2@nd.edu if uncertain about an item.

1. **Blue section:**
   - Add the research question and research aims so that LASER PULSE can be quickly reminded about the project.
2. **Columns:**

   A. **Name:** Only list people who are doing a significant amount of analytical and/or research work. This includes data collection – as long as the person in question has input into the development of the survey materials and/or implementation plan. A good benchmark to use for inclusion is someone who would later be listed as a co-author on technical reports, articles, etc. that are produced. (This is not definitive, though.)

   The person listed should be paid from the award to do the work, although that alone is not a sufficient condition. For example, Notre Dame hired students to help search and compile private sector engagement (PSE) literature and fill in a PSE document matrix – but this is not a significant intellectual contribution, so they do not appear in the roster.

   As implied in the first paragraph of 2.A. above, a data enumerator hired solely to collect info would not be listed either – only someone that also had input into the questionnaire development, survey plan, etc. would be considered as a collaborator.

   B. **Organization:** The place of primary employment

   C. **Title:** Position title at primary place of employment

   D. **Team role:** This the LASER PULSE designation of the team members Translation Partner generally means someone working outside of an institute of higher education.

   Primary Co-PI: This is the person most involved/knowledgeable about the buy-in other than the PI. This person is the proxy for the PI, and ideally (and in most cases) will be with an organization different from the PI's organization. If more than one Co-PI can be considered as the Primary Co-PI, then the buy-in team must select one or defer to the LASER PULSE Management team to make the selection.

   If a given person listed is a graduate student gaining experience in research (e.g. on methods development, implementation). There must be an intellectual contribution for a student to qualify for inclusion on the personnel roster.

   E. **Email address:** Best email address for LASER PULSE to contact each individual with reporting requests.

   F. **University type:** Only needs to be filled in if the individual listed in row is primarily working at a university. All other people can leave this column blank.

   G. **Practitioner or researcher:** The LASER PULSE project aims to bridge researchers and practitioners. Practitioner in LASER PULSE is defined as someone working for a nongovernmental organization, government agency, or in the private sector.

   Individuals from USAID are counted as a development practitioner (especially those who represent the mission or bureau that contracted LASER) <u>if they are providing significant</u>

input into the effort. Think in terms of "co-creation" and whether or not you would consider them to be a collaborator. Please identify the specific USAID operating unit for all USAID personnel listed.

H. **Sex:** How the individual in the row identifies.

I. **Comments:** Use this column to note anything relevant to the individual listed. For example, if there is a change in staff then note when the person left the project and who took their place; then note the start date for the new individual.

3. **Red section: Oversight**

    A. **Name:** The individuals listed below this red bar provide general oversight of the buy-in, from USAID and LASER PULSE, and the other columns follow the same instructions as listed above.

Deliverable Tracker: Guidelines for Listing Anticipated Buy-In Outputs

This is the second worksheet in the spreadsheet called Project Tracker file (see here for a template). To toggle between the different worksheets in the spreadsheet you can find the names at the bottom of the screen. The deliverable tracker worksheet allows LASER Buy-In teams to better track and prepare for various deliverables that they will generate, including convenings that they plan to host or attend.

Although LASER management has pre-filled some of the items (obtained from the project description), we understand that changes are always being made to a given Buy-In's scope of work and anticipated outputs – it is for this reason that we request all PIs to validate and/or revise the list and update it whenever warranted. If an existing, pre-filled item in Column A is not a part of your project, feel free to delete the row if you wish to streamline the list of deliverables.

Some of the required fields are self-explanatory; for those that are not, the following numbered items provide content guidance for the key fields of information displayed in the file:

1. **Blue Section:**

    - **Project start date:** The day the project officially begins, according to the Project Description (PD) document.

    - **Project end date:** The day the project ends. If there is a no cost extension, list the change of end date here.

2. **Columns**

    A. **Deliverable Name/Title:** Items listed here were initially taken from the project description – there may be redundancy or other issues requiring revision, such as important items not listed.

    It is very important to list various convenings (i.e., dissemination events) planned by your Buy-In to transmit project results to policy-makers, donors, and other information brokers who can facilitate the wider uptake of lessons learned, other advancements in knowledge, improved processes, etc.

Phases: If possible list the deliverables in the order they will be produced beginning with the planning phase, followed by the inception phase, and finally the implementation phase. Anticipated outputs refers to project deliverables otherwise not represented under one of the other sub-headings.

Feel free to rename and/or reorganize the sub-headings in this column to best reflect the specific circumstances of your project.

Links: If the deliverable is electronic, please embed the link to the document in the name listed in this worksheet.

B. **Person responsible:** This is the individual that is coordinating the deliverable.

C. **Lead Author:** If the coordinator and the lead author are different, please note here who the document will be credited to – using last name and first initial (e.g. Gilmour, D.) of the principal author.

D. **Deliverable Type:** Choose from the drop-down menu in Column D the type of deliverable that best describes the item that is listed in Column A. For convenings (i.e. dissemination events), select "presentation" and then add additional detail (e.g. webinar, workshop) in the comments field.

E. **Output Category:** Use the drop-down menu in Column E to indicate the general category of research to which the deliverable belongs; select "Other" if the item in question is not research *per se* (e.g. IRB protocol) or is not really research-related (e.g. inception report). If you are unsure of the category, leave the cell blank and note this condition in the comments field.

F. **Project description deadline:** In some cases the Project Description has a deadline; list that date here for deliverable only if it is stated in the project description. If this date changes due to a delay, then use Column G to indicate the new date.

G. **Due Date:** Use this column to provide an anticipated date (month, year) of completion for the deliverable or convening in question if: there is no date in Column F, or if the date in Column F needs to be revised. Note that a rough estimate is OK if there is uncertainty regarding when the deliverable will actually be completed, but at least make sure there is some information provided. In some instances, a very general date (e.g. FY2) is already provided in terms of expected fiscal year; this was done for management planning purposes. If you have a more precise estimate, please update the cell into the month / year format.

H. **Status:** Use the drop-down menu in Column H to indicate the current status of the deliverable or convening. The principal choices are "On Track", "Delayed", "Completed", "USAID revising", and "Final". Leave the cell blank if work on the item in question has not been started. "Completed" indicates the deliverable has been sent to LASER for review and comments.

I. **Delivery date:** *this information will be entered by LASER personnel, and the column header is shaded yellow to denote this fact. Shading also applies to Columns M and N.*

J. **Dissemination date:** LASER PULSE encourages the dissemination of research products. If the deliverable is disseminated to a target audience then note the date here.

K. **Dissemination event:** A dissemination event could occur via a webinar, workshop, or website launch. Briefly note the event name and place here.

L. **Dissemination audience:** If a dissemination event occurred then note, in general, who attended the event and/or the intended audience of the research product (e.g. USAID, Ministry of Education staff).

M. **Post to DEC?:** For those PIs familiar with USAID reporting, you may know whether or not a given output will ultimately be uploaded by LASER to the DEC (USAID's "Development Exchange Clearinghouse"). If so, please select "Yes" or "No" from the drop-down menu for a given item. If you do not know, or are uncertain, select "not sure".

N. **Date posted to DEC:** *this information will be entered by LASER personnel.*

O. **Notes:** Use this column to include any explanatory comments or notes that can clarify uncertainties about a given field, and/or provide additional relevant details about a deliverable or a convening.

ERT Progress Tracker: Guidelines for Reporting Information on Research Translation

LASER PULSE defines Embedded Research Translation (ERT) as an iterative co-design process among academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders in which research is intentionally applied to a development challenge. Core to this approach to translation are four pillars: partnership, process, product, and dissemination. Additional information on the Embedded Research Translation model can be found on the LASER PULSE website. Given that ERT is an iterative process, project PIs are encouraged to monitor their progress in implementing their research translation strategy and make revisions in collaboration with their translation partner(s) and in consultation with the LASER PULSE Research Translation Team to ensure impact.

The Embedded Research Translation Progress Tracker serves as a guide for project teams to monitor their progress in implementing their research translation project. Additionally, this tracker serves as a communication tool between the PIs and the LASER PULSE Research Translation team during the initial meeting (if applicable) and any additional one-on-one consultations.

The LASER PULSE Research Translation Team will be available throughout the project to advise on Embedded Research Translation through one-on-one consultations and provide support and resources as needed. If you have any questions about ERT reporting or procedures, please contact laura.riddering@crs.org.

The ERT Progress Tracker is the third worksheet in the Progress Tracker spreadsheet. This is an example of the template. Some of the required fields are self-explanatory; for those that are not, the following numbered items provide content guidance for the key fields of information displayed in the file:

1. **Blue section:**

   - **Key stakeholders:** An Embedded Research Translation project will ultimately result in a co-design product to be translated for impact. The stakeholders are the organizations that will use the products after the project is completed. Stakeholders should be consulted so that the research solution is custom generated for the development challenge and the outcomes are more readily adapted and applied by practitioners. Check the LASER PULSE ERT website for tools, like Stakeholder Analysis, to support this.

2. **Rows on Four Pillars:**

The four pillars are designed to guide the ERT approach; there are no strict expectations of what activities should fit into each pillar. LASER PULSE designed the Progress Tracker around the four pillars of the Embedded Research Translation model (partnership, process, product, and dissemination) to reinforce the iterative nature of our model and to encourage projects to plan for each of these translation components in a concrete, practical way.

This Progress Tracker may identify additional activities that are required for implementing a research translation strategy that were not a part of a project's original work plan, particularly for those activities associated with partnership and process, such as establishing regular meetings and partnership check-ins between the researchers and practitioners on a team.

- **Partnership:** This refers to any activities that establish a partnership through the integration of researchers and translation partners early and throughout the research collaboration.
- **Process:** This refers to any activities that establish processes to ensure that the research team has a solid foundation to work together effectively on development research.
- **Product:** This refers to any activities that results in a co-designed translation product that informs policy and/or practice.
- **Dissemination:** Any activities that enable wider application and scale-up beyond the initial translation partnership and toward a larger uptake of relevant findings in the field or region.

3. **Columns:**

A. **Work Plan Activity Number:** This monitoring tool directly links the activities in a project's annual work plan to the project's Embedded Research Translation strategy to ensure that the planned activities and deliverables, and their associated timelines, are aligned to maintain the project on a path for development impact.

It is possible that there may be more activities listed here than are in the workplan. In that case, there is no need to list the activity number. PIs are invited to add rows or edit tasks based on their work plans and should update the status column throughout the project.

B. **Activity Description:** Provide brief details on the activity.

C. **Output:** List if there is an activity, tool, or document created as an output from the activity. If it is an electronic item, link the source to the name of the output. Some of these outputs may also be listed in the deliverable tracker. Most likely there will be more outputs here than in the deliverable tracker.

D. **Timeframe:** Provide an anticipated time range date (month, year) for the activity. A rough estimate is OK if there is uncertainty regarding when that may be, but at least make sure there is some information provided.

E. **Lead person:** The person coordinating the activity.

F. **Status:** Use the drop-down menu to indicate the current status of the activity. The principal choices are "planning", "on track", and "completed." Leave the cell blank if work on the activity has not been started.

Communication Tracker: Guidelines for use

This is the final worksheet in the Progress tracker spreadsheet. This serves as a way to track communication between LASER PULSE and the research team. LASER PULSE will primarily fill out this form, but project teams are strongly encouraged to enter pertinent information here.

1. **Columns:**

   A. **Item:** Name of email, document, or communication sent.

   B. **Date Sent:** When the communication occurred.

   C. **Person Responsible:** Who sent or will send the item.

   D. **Follow up:** In case it is necessary to send another email, the date will be listed here.

   E. **Date completed**: If the communication was a request to do something, then the date the request is completed will be listed here.

   F. **Status:** Use the drop-down menu to indicate the current status of the deliverable or convening. The principal choices are "On Track", "Delayed", "Completed", "USAID revising", and "Final". Leave the cell blank if work on the item in question has not been started.

Form 2: Buy-in Data Reporting Form

A Qualtrics survey (link here) is the main vehicle for M&E reporting by LASER Buy-Ins. The survey is designed both for new Buy-Ins (i.e., first time reporting) and for those Buy-Ins that have previously conducted M&E reporting. For the latter group, the survey will skip certain questions if the PI indicates that a given data field does not require any update to previously reported information. Note that only data specific to the given reporting period (either October 1 to March 30; or April 1 to September 30) should be reported.

The survey contains 3 sections (General Information, Indicator Data, Narratives) and a total of 59 questions, although many questions will be skipped over for a given Buy-In. Within the form itself, supplemental information and/or examples are provided for questions that, on their surface, seem ambiguous and/or contain certain nuances (situational or otherwise) that pose difficulty in answering without further clarification.

The items listed below identify the type of data collected via the reporting form:

1. **General Information**
   1. Buy-In name – validate or revise (i.e. define) the designated "short title" name of the Buy-In.
   2. Brief 2-5 description of the subject, purpose, and approach of the Buy-In.
   3. Type of USAID Operating Unit that commissioned the Buy-In.
   4. Focal country/region.
   5. PI and Primary Co-PI name, sex, name of institution.
2. **Indicator Data**
   1. How many development/policy actors are significantly contributing to this Buy-In?
      - This question refers to Buy-In team members not affiliated with a university, and responses are disaggregated (d/a) by gender, organization type, and region.
      - The data reported here should be derived from, and match (in summary form), the personnel listed in the team roster worksheet (see Section 1) for your Buy-In. Please review (and update if necessary) your Buy-In team's roster beforehand.
   2. How many primary research products (i.e., non-translated research) to report?
      - List title(s) of research outputs completed during the reporting period; d/a by type.
   3. How many translated research products to report?
      - List title(s) of translated research outputs completed during the reporting period; d/a by type and gender.
   4. How many different types of translated research outputs produced by this Buy-In were shared with community-of-practice (CoP) networks, policy-makers, pvt sector, and/or donors?

5. How many convenings with decision-makers to disseminate research for use and/or develop policy recommendations? (d/a by region)
6. How many participants at convenings with decision-makers to disseminate research for use and/or develop policy recommendations? (d/a by gender, region)
7. How many students trained in research experiences during the reporting period?
    - A given student can only be counted as trained once per year; therefore, only count a student if they have not already been counted for the present year.

3. Narratives

1. Provide a brief summary (2-3 paragraphs) of the progress made during this reporting period.
2. Provide a projection (2-3 paragraphs) of the work yet to be completed under this Buy-In.
3. Provide a brief summary of impacts, if any, due to the response to the Covid-19 situation.

4. Program or Policy Changes

1. Impacts on programs or policies of other organizations resulting from the project's work?

5. Photos

1. Provide, if available, any good pictures that can visually represent the project well.