

USAID Knowledge Management Inventory

“Agency IT Applications Community of Practice”

1. Describe your knowledge sharing activity - what did you do? – how did you do it?

Activity: This activity is an Agency-wide IT applications community of practice, whose main activity to date is to hold monthly meetings (since October) on various IT topics. Meetings are held at the USAID Library Conference Room on the mezzanine level of RRB on the second Tuesday of each month, with the program from 10:00 – 11:30 AM, and a prior networking session from 9:30-10:00.

Sponsors: E&E and EGAT, in association with M/IRM staff, CIO staff, and USAID’s KM Team. Also a Steering Committee drawn from E&E, EGAT, M/AA and IRM/IPA.

Next Program: The next meeting will be on Tuesday, Dec. 10, from 1:00PM – 2:30PM and the topic will be : "Open Source Software: What is it, and How are USAID and other Federal Agencies Applying it?", with speakers from GWU, MITRE, Bureau of the Census and USAID (see also relevant Agency wide notice).

This is an open technology forum, and all interested USAID and partner staff (contractors, grantees and IT vendors) are welcome!

2. Describe your motivation / rationale / value proposition / business case for the initiative – why did you do it? – for whom?

General goal: To make IT use by AID employees (both individually and as groups) more productive in addressing internal, operational applications. The hope is to provide an ongoing forum to share IT best practices, and try to both expedite and make more transparent the sharing of prospective IT solutions around the Agency, hopefully in concert with USAID’s ongoing business transformation process.

3. Describe the results of the effort – who and/or what was impacted and how? – what are the benefits?

Possible IT CoP Results (and Metrics):

- **Training** of average user in practical application of technology (number of users trained, and increase in personal productivity as possible metrics)
- Informal guidance, “best practices” re development of parameters for or testing of prospective **standardized software packages** (user survey and IRM feedback)
- Expanded proportion of **early involvement of USAID/partner users** (and cross section of IT professionals) in IT policy and technology choices (number of partner, foreign affairs, other donors, and field Missions represented - and actively participating - at CoP briefings on USAID IT policy and technology plans)
- Influence on **IT policy and technology decision-making**, both at the central and bureau levels at USAID (decision-makers’ reports)

- Establishment and Sustainability of **IT subgroups** more focussed on a specific performance, opportunity or resource challenges: e.g. of Web developers (to improve efficiency of Web design), system administrators (to reduce system downtime or help desk overload), users/IT professionals re potential applications of Open Source Software (number of new applications), users/IT professionals to develop criteria re hardware (e.g. networked PDAs) or software (e.g. practical collaboration tools) for later consideration by IRM.
- Production of **USAID IT CoP Directory of Expertise** and Subgroup Areas of Interest (feedback by users of directory that latter is relevant to IT problem resolution)

4. Describe any future implications or issues related to the initiative, e.g., what plans are in place? What current constraints or challenges are you facing? How is the initiative being sustained / maintained? How can it be replicated or scaled up?

Future possible Speaker Topics (other suggestions by CoP attendees?) :

- Open Source Software and relevance for USAID Internal/Partner Applications
- Collaboration Tools and Portals: Vendor, USAID, and Other Experience
- Document Management Software and Related Work Processes
- Web Management Basics and Prospects for more Dynamic, User Friendly Web Sites.
- Computer-enabled Training for Personnel
- How the above Technology Complements USAID's Evolving Enterprise Architecture and Business Transformation Process.

Issues:

- Sustainability of group, how to broaden participation
- How to help business transformation, without group becoming "bureaucratized"
- How to maximize role of partners and vendors...without "commercials"!

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Electronic documentation link (if available): WebBoard and Web site currently under development.