

# USAID Knowledge Management Inventory: Agency Information Technology Team (I-Team)

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

Agency Information Technology Team (I-Team). Established by Action Memorandum by AA/G in October 1998 to “provide a non-bureaucratic, team mechanism for exchanging information about information technology program successes and lessons learned throughout USAID.” Check us out: <http://inside.usaid.gov/ICT/> The I-Team is four years old!

The I-Team meets as needed, usually no more than once every three-four weeks. Representatives from any operating unit in USAID/W with an interest in ICT-for-development attend, and the group is remarkable for the diversity of sectoral interests represented. Virtual members from missions are kept informed by e-mail. Presently, 44 members are on the USAID/W list; 50 on the virtual list. The I-Team is housed within the EGAT Bureau, is coordinated by EGAT/EIT/IT, and reports to the AA/EGAT.

The I-Team serves as a kind of Chamber of Commerce, promoting the interests of its members. As its “charter” action memorandum states, the I-Team does not receive or program funds; does not have permanent staff; does not coordinate IT generally.” The I-Team does:

- Share lessons learned, often through presentations by key technical people, inside and outside the Agency;
- Solve problems of the group or those posed by the Administrator and Missions, such as providing instruction on computer donations or a technical bulletin on Open Source Software;
- Promote and publicize the activities and successes of group members;
- Coordinate Agency participation in USG IT initiatives such as the Digital Freedom Initiative, a Presidential initiative presently under consideration.

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

The I-Team was established because of the need to have a single focal point for IT-for-development as an emerging cross-cutting theme. The Administrator expressed the need for such a technical point to refer to in matters involving information technology applications. In the year 2000, IT-for-development became one of five Agency cross-cutting themes and Agency primary and secondary codes for IT were established, in part an I-Team accomplishment.

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

The I-Team played a major role in:

- Successfully coordinating the Internet for Economic Development Presidential Initiative, guiding its initiation in 21 countries;
- Fostering the initiation of similar cross-cutting I-Teams in regional bureaus and Missions;
- Generating an Agency constituency to establish IT-for-development as an Agency cross-cutting theme;
- Fostering a proactive IT-for-development climate for Regional Bureaus so that ANE, E&E and LAC now have IT-for-development coordinators/champions similar to the Leland Coordinator in AFR;
- Bridging units with common interests to foster unified action, such as;
- Providing a forum for USAID managers on IT-for-development questions/issues from Y2K to Agency webpage clearance policy;
- Providing information to its members on innovative technologies and approaches to their use;
- Providing information to its members on the activities of participating units;
- Establishing both the I-Team and the Agency Information Technology webpages;
- Providing technical support for a conference of 300 NGO participants on IT-for-development;
- “Being there” as a relatively well-known Agency reference point on IT-for-development.

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?

EGAT plans to maintain the I-Team with its present mandate. It is a challenge to maintain and take best advantage of the webpage. Experimentation with meeting in virtual space is yet to come. The I-Team probably should not be scaled up. It may be a useful model for other communities of practice because it is a “safe haven” for the exchange and promotion of ideas. The I-Team is a recognized community of practice with bureaucratic standing but without the bureaucratic constraints and/or threats that a funded and staffed operating unit might convey.

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Electronic documentation link (if available): <http://inside.usaid.gov/ICT/>