

USAID Knowledge Management Inventory

USAID Development Information Services (DIS)

“Using Knowledge for Change...”

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

USAID’s Development Information Services (DIS), part of CDIE’s knowledge sharing program, provides a broad spectrum of information services to USAID and its development partners. DIS is a “one-stop shop” for accessing the Agency’s development knowledge and experience, as well as the experience of other development organizations and academic institutions. We provide research and statistical analysis and library services to support USAID’s objectives.

DIS knowledge resources and services include:

- The USAID Library, which makes available a specialized collection of sustainable development literature, as well as timely and relevant print, multimedia, and online resources from government, commercial and academic sources. (<http://library.info.usaid.gov>).
- The Economic and Social Database (<http://cdie.usaid.gov/esdb>), a database of current and historical data reflecting the socio-economic trends of developing countries, tailored to the needs of USAID professionals.
- Our specialized subject, sector, and regional research and economic analysts provide value-added knowledge and statistical services, including research and quantitative analysis to support USAID decisionmakers.

Knowledge sharing techniques and tools that we practice include:

- Requests & Responses: a monthly newsletter sent throughout the Agency that highlights some of the responses by DIS staff to requests for research and statistical analysis. Through Requests and Responses, USAID staff and partners learn about DIS products and can request to see the completed work, including products such as lessons learned, syntheses of experience, policy analyses and reports, database searches, economic and social data analyses, tailored information packages and referrals.
- Weekly Report: this report is meant to inform a small group of Agency staff and the entire DIS staff of the status of the services that we provide on a weekly basis. Both completed and ongoing requests are reported. Select information from the weekly report contributes to the contents of the Requests & Responses.
- Development Dialogues: presentations on cutting-edge development topics of interest to the Agency and partners. DIS invites audiences working in specific areas to these one-and-a-half hour presentations and discussions. Recent Development Dialogue topics included Title II food aid, E-commerce, E-governance, and global development issues.

- Question & Answer (Q&A) Sessions: an internal knowledge sharing mechanism, DIS staff gather together once every three weeks to share resources, offer advice and support in responding to customer requests. Notes are shared internally, particularly for those unable to attend the session.
- Virtual Questions & Answers: an internal knowledge sharing mechanism, DIS staff continue the Q&A discussion via e-mail, when quick answers and resources are needed. Virtual Q&As can occur at any time.
- MIS: an internal knowledge sharing mechanism, DIS staff record their requests, how they responded to the requests, the resources they used, and the product that they provided.
- DIS Intranet Site: an internal mechanism for sharing knowledge to help DIS staff in their work. Resources include information for new staff, orientation guidelines, committee meeting notes and staff phone numbers.
- Staff Meetings: an internal knowledge sharing mechanism, DIS holds bi-monthly staff meetings to share the progress of our overall activities. Time is allotted to recognize new staff, staff contributions to knowledge sharing, and kudos from our customers for work that is well done.
- Brown Bag Lunches: an internal knowledge sharing mechanism, brown bag lunches are staff-led trainings with their own colleagues as participants. The training committee developed a survey to find out what training staff need to better serve their clients and to benefit their own professional development. Staff were also asked what skills they have to offer to their colleagues by way of training or brown bag lunches.
- Informal events (monthly birthday parties, holiday parties, special events celebrations to celebrate weddings, births, going-away): another internal knowledge sharing mechanism that fosters discussion among staff and allow for conversations for sharing our expertise.

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

DIS recognizes that the more everyone knows about current staff activities and priorities, and the more they can communicate with each other about their activities, skills and interests and feel that they can tap into all DIS expertise, the better we'll be able to serve USAID's needs. DIS creates opportunities for staff working in development to learn from each other's knowledge and experience. We foster a culture of collaboration and information sharing.

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

We attribute much of the long-term success of the services we provide to USAID to our culture of Knowledge Sharing. This culture gives any of our staff, regardless of their level, internal team or specialization, the ability and freedom to tap into the knowledge of all other

expertise on the project. This gives DIS the ability to expertly respond to USAID's information/knowledge needs by tapping into the necessary resources and expertise to achieve its objectives.

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?

At DIS, we will continue to find ways to better serve our clients and keep current in our fields of specialization. We will employ other methods of sharing information both external to the project and within. Other internal mechanisms for knowledge sharing are being researched to foster an informal, sharing environment. Future activities include incentive programs and awards to recognize staff for their contributions.

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Electronic documentation link (if available):