

Project Initiation Document

Project Name: [Title] | **Project Code:** [To Be Assigned Upon Project Initiation]

Objective:

This should be consistent with the project title in the project tracker.

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Agency, Cross-agency, or Administration Priority:

Briefly note the connection to the agency Strategic Plan, Performance target, Learning Agenda, Annual Evaluation Plan, or other record of agency, cross-agency, or Administration priority (e.g., economic recovery, small business, etc.).

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Potential Impact:

Describe in a few sentences how the results of the project could directly affect a federal program or policy, the potential impact for stakeholders, and the possibility for scale. Some key questions:

Importance of decision

- Is evidence likely to influence decision making (e.g., timeliness, management buy-in, political will, legal permissibility, funding availability, etc.)?
- Is the decision consequential (including the importance of precise results that may prevent costly—financial or otherwise—mistakes)?

Potential net benefits (for current project, not assuming any scaling of effects)

- How many people are likely to change behavior if the specific barriers are removed?
- Are there subpopulations who might have particular potential gains that would reduce racial inequities?
- What is the value of each individual taking the action? For example, is it the ultimate outcome we are interested in or an intermediate step? Is there a cost savings associated with the action, or a likely health benefit?
- What is the potential to generate cost savings?

Potential generalizability and scalability

- Can the lessons from the project travel (both to other government contexts and more generally)?
- Can the potential interventions scale?
- What is the cost of scaling and generalizing the intervention, both one-time and ongoing?

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Behavioral Barriers:

[This should include a basic process map, where you identify points that the project will seek to understand further. Briefly describe how behavioral barriers will be diagnosed, and your understanding of the process that will be improved through this project. See the internal resources Introduction to Behavioral Mapping and Behavioral Mapping and Discovery for guidance on when different methods might be appropriate for a project. Preliminary ideas about specific behavioral barriers are welcome but not required at this stage. If ideas about specific barriers are available, then include any information that might be available about the potential impact of removing those barriers. You should give some thought to where an intervention will have the greatest impact in the causal chain and how sticky behaviors may be. For example:

- How many people are predisposed to the intended action (i.e., people for whom we do not have to change their intention)?
- Is removing the barrier sufficient to complete the action? Of those who are predisposed, how many additional people would take the action if the barrier were removed?
- How many steps (or cumulative actions) are there in the causal chain between the intervention and the action?

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Intervention Design Plan:

Briefly describe the plan for designing an intervention based on what is learned about behavioral barriers. Preliminary ideas about specific interventions are welcome but not required at this stage.

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Cost of the Intervention:

Is the intervention expected to have no or low cost? Will estimating its cost — one-time, ongoing, or both — be important? If so, what will be required to conduct an adequate cost analysis?

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Evaluation Feasibility:

Describe the tentative design of the evaluation, including any available information about sample size and statistical power, and any challenges to its feasibility. Detailed power calculations are **not** required at this point, but we want to ensure that adequate power is reasonably likely based on what is known so far.

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Data Availability:

Note the ultimate target outcome. Include a brief description of the datasets that measure this outcome. If it is not possible to access this data, describe the alternative, and why it will be a good proxy. In addition to outcome data, will cost data be required and available?

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Results Utilization:

Briefly describe the intended utilization for the results. For example, is the project worthwhile on its own merits (e.g., not scaled or iterated)? What will be required for the agency partner to successfully utilize results (e.g., scale-up, policy change, additional funds)? Some helpful questions include:

- Who within the partner agency will need to be informed, and whose support will be needed?
- What are the cost implications?
- Are there important deadlines or other aspects of timing that will influence decision making?

For this section it may be helpful to describe utilization goals for the range of expected outcomes (e.g., null, negative, positive effect).

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Results Dissemination:

Briefly describe tentative plans for dissemination, including potential audiences and outlets. Note whether any of the potential outlets have requirements that require early planning (e.g., academic journals that require pre-registration).

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Project Roles:

Note who makes key approval decisions and decisions about scale at the agency. If academic affiliates, contractors, or other implementing partners are involved, briefly describe their roles.

[Insert text here, and delete the red prompt above when the document is final.]

Project Agreements:

Will the project need any of the following? Check all that apply.

- ☐ IRB approval or documentation of exemption
- ☐ PRA approval
- ☐ Data-sharing agreement (DSA)
- ☐ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- ☐ Other special agreement: _____

Risk Points:

Are there elements necessary for this project to be successful that are not assured and need specific attention? Please explain here.

The following items are determined at the Project Initiation discussion, or in follow-up meetings after it.

Project Criteria Checklist

Criterion	Y / N	Notes (if not strong Y)
Relevance: Answers a priority question and fills an important evidence gap		
Support: An agency collaborator willing to act on and share results and other key deliverables		
Data availability: Data for the study is currently collected (or could be easily collected) by the federal agency		
Rigor: Sample size large enough for statistical power and policy relevance		
Evidence-based: Program or program change has a plausible and clear theory of change with potential for impact on a priority outcome		

Financial Implications:

Part of an existing IAA ?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If No, what is the status of IAA conversations? [Consult Portfolio Lead]

Additional financial needs and timelines for travel/site visits/qualitative work, etc.

Additional Support Needs:

- ☐ Intervention design support
☐ Travel
☐ Interviews

Outcome of Project Initiation Discussion:

Will the project move forward?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Pending

What issues need to be tracked and resolved?

These are issues that could limit the feasibility or impact of the project. For each of these issues, what does successful resolution look like? This must be filled out if the outcome of the initiation meeting was "Pending."

Issue	What is required to resolve this issue?

When will we know if these issues can be successfully resolved?

A meeting must be scheduled to follow-up and discuss the resolution of all issues listed above when the outcome of an initiation meeting is “Pending.” A meeting may also be scheduled to discuss next steps if a project will not be moving forward. This follow-up meeting was held on: [Date].

How was each issue resolved?

If the initiation meeting outcome was “Pending,” please summarize the results of the follow-up meeting after it is held. How was each issue listed in the table above resolved? Include any details that might be important to review at later project stages, or when planning other similar projects in the future.

1. Issue 1
2. Issue 2
3. Issue 3