

# AGILE PLAN: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION ONLINE COURSE

## RATIONALE

**Project:** Design and develop a series of modules that complete an elearning course supporting climate change adaptation for development projects around the world.

**Users:** USAID headquarters and project staff

**Stakeholders:** Any international development worker involved in USAID projects which are affected by climate change

**Product Owner:** USAID Instructional Design Manager

## Nature of the Instructional Problem

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a government agency whose mission is “...to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity” (Mission, Vision and Values, 2016). To meet this complex mission, USAID contains several bureaus which are organized by geographic region and by program type. Under the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and the Environment (E3), the Global Climate Change office (GCCO) is currently working on a 5-year strategy aimed at reducing emissions while achieving growth, adapting to conditions resulting from climate change and integrating good climate change policies into development work. In order to support climate-smart development, the Global Climate Change Office has released the Climate Resilient Development Guide.

This guide provides the framework for understanding and addressing the risks of climate change and its potential impact on developing countries. The framework promotes an approach that helps practitioners achieve development goals despite climate change. It walks readers through a process of understanding development goals in a given country or community, the inputs and conditions necessary to achieve those goals, and the stresses – climate and non-climate – that may impede progress toward those goals. USAID’s Climate Resilient Development Guide offers

a five-stage approach to help decision-makers and development practitioners at all levels systematically assess climate-related risks and prioritize actions that promote climate-resilient development.

A series of modules are needed to provide training to USAID employees on how to apply this framework to development projects. While USAID employees include people from around the world who speak a variety of languages, the training will be conducted in English as all staff are required to have a professional language proficiency in English. Due to the urgent nature of this project, this course needs to be created as soon as possible. As the global consequences of climate change continue to unfold, USAID recognizes that focus may need to be shifted as the course is being delivered and tested around the world.

## Reasons for Preferring Agile

There are a number of values and principles that together define an Agile project. According to the Manifesto, Agile projects prioritize individuals and interactions over processes and tools, working software over comprehensive documentation, customer collaboration over contract negotiation and responding to change over following a plan.

Below is a further breakdown outlining the reasons for preferring Agile management for this project:

- **Dynamic, changing requirements:** USAID is a large organization that serves people around the world. In order for this product to meet the needs of the intended audience, there are many factors that need to be considered, such as linguistic, cultural and environmental differences, and the evolution of climate change, all of which won't be available at the start of the project. As pieces of working product are delivered and tested all over the world, requirements are likely to shift based on varying needs. For example, the project team might find that it's beneficial to develop an additional, more specific training for a certain project or region of the world in addition to the general training. This would be possible with Agile.
- **Collaborative and available client:** The client is DC-based and readily available for meeting and reviews. The ability to quickly convey face-to-face feedback will ensure information flows seamlessly throughout the team. When face-to-face communication is not practical, live video teleconference will be used to continue collaborations. Immediate client availability will also allow for an ongoing feedback loop and aid in developing lessons learned.
- **Delivery of working product throughout development:** USAID has selected an iterative approach, which means course development will be done in phases. Each module (Introduction, Scope, Assess, Design, Implement and Manage, Evaluate and Adjust, and Conclusion) will be developed and delivered as a high-quality, ready-for-use 'chunk.' The chunks will be developed in sprints according to the requirements prioritized by USAID throughout the project. Any errors or concerns raised after

release will be quickly communicated to the client and stakeholders and promptly corrected by the project team. This way, feedback is continually incorporated into the product.

- **Frequent and open communication with stakeholders:** Stakeholders are USAID employees working on projects affected by climate change. Because of the vast range of USAID projects, it is essential that stakeholders come from diverse regions and programs to ensure adequate representation. USAID has committed to providing assistance to a widely varied group of stakeholders that serve diverse regions and functions. These stakeholders will have daily communication with the scrum team and will be involved in the writing of user stories, offering their perspective and assistance whenever possible.
- **Short timeframe with high level of urgency:** As climate change continues to grow as a global threat, the pressure is on for USAID to address climate-related problems immediately. The creation of this course is evidence to countries around the world that the U.S. government is concerned about the global consequences of climate change and is ready to step up and help. In order for USAID staff to receive training as soon as possible to begin adapting the framework, there will be multiple deliveries of live working product. USAID has requested that the complete product be delivered within six months.

## Benefits of Using Agile

There are many benefits of using Agile for this project. Here are a few of them:

- **The project can start immediately:** With Agile, there is no need to wait for a complete list of requirements before beginning development. Just-in-time planning is a focus in Agile, which is appropriate in this situation. USAID feels a lot of urgency to address climate change. The sooner the training is started, the sooner project staff can begin to apply the climate resilient development framework to their work and respond more effectively to climate change.
- **Changes can be accommodated throughout the process:** With a multinational group of stakeholders, there is bound to be a lot of varied feedback. Using Agile, the project team can respond quickly to new ideas, incorporating them by priority into the development process at the beginning of each sprint.
- **High quality work is encouraged and nurtured:** The best designs emerge from self-organizing teams. The project team is co-located and has been given full authority to organize as needed to complete project work. The scrum master is empowered to protect the project team from distractions, and motivated individuals will be supported. All team members are cross-functional.

- **Fast delivery of working chunks of product:** Delivering working software frequently is Agile principle #3. A chunk of the online course will be delivered at the end of each sprint. These working chunks will be uploaded to the USAID University LMS where they will be live for testing and usage in order to collect feedback to drive future requirements.

## Risk Mitigation Strategy

- **Project team and stakeholders may not be familiar with Agile methodology:** In order to educate project staff on Agile methods, all staff and stakeholders will participate in an introductory Agile training course. Additionally, an Agile mentor will be added to ensure the team receives any necessary support so they may devote more time to course development.
- **Many stakeholders are in other countries, making regular face-to-face communication challenging:** While it is ideal to have regular communication with stakeholders out in the field, this will prove to be very difficult given the geographical distance and time zones involved. However, USAID staff who are employed in the field have regular contact with their bureau colleagues who are headquartered in Washington, DC. Therefore, headquarter staff at the upper management level who are well-informed in the issues faced by field staff and Chiefs of Party on all major environmental projects will serve as the primary stakeholders. They are available for regular face-to-face meetings which will allow them to take an active role in the project including attending regular meetings and contributing to the writing of user stories. Stakeholders located around the world will also be encouraged to join via teleconference whenever possible.
- **Government bureaucracy may interfere with the Agile process:** An essential part of the Agile process is providing barely sufficient documentation, which may at times conflict with the documentation-heavy style of the government. While this client will require more documentation than other non-government clients, the project team will stick to the barely sufficient philosophy and keep documents brief and informal. If there is a need for more documentation, the scrum master will take on this task so that the project team can continue to remain fully focused on the product.

## VISION STATEMENT

**FOR** USAID headquarters and project staff

**WHO** need to adapt a newly released Climate Resilient Development Framework to their development projects

**THE** comprehensive training

**IS** a series of internally marketed online modules with analytics reporting

**THAT** will educate USAID workers about the effects of climate change on international development and measure employee participation.

**UNLIKE** training products that do not use formal instructional design methodologies or communicate one-way without user input

**OUR PRODUCT** is well-designed, user-friendly and supports USAID's strategy to adapt to conditions resulting from climate change and integrate good climate change policies into development work.

# ROADMAP

		<b>SPRINT 1:</b> Weeks 1-3	<b>SPRINT 2:</b> Weeks 4-6	<b>SPRINT 3:</b> Weeks 7-9	<b>SPRINT 4:</b> Weeks 10-12	<b>SPRINT 5:</b> Weeks 13-15	<b>SPRINT 6:</b> Weeks 16-18	<b>SPRINT 7:</b> Weeks 19-21
<b>THEMES</b>	<b>Live Segments of Online Course</b>	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Module 5	Module 6 Module 7	
	<b>Internal Marketing</b>	First Announcement email	Fliers for HQ	Poster for HQ			Second Announcement email Course CD-ROM	
	<b>Analytics</b>	First Registration analytics report						Second Registration analytics report

## References

Mission, Vision and Values. (2016, January 07). Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/mission-vision-values>

Office of Global Climate Change. (2015, July 14). Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-economic-growth-education-and-environment/office-global>

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