



Quality at Implementation Report for Australian Middle East NGO Cooperation Program, Phase 2 (AMENCA2)

Summary

Initiative Name	AMENCA2 – NGO Design and Implementation		
Initiative Number	INI054		
Start date	01 July 2008	End date	01 June 2014
Value	\$AUD30 million	Expenditure to date	\$AUD16,536,868.19
Report drafted by	Melissa George	Date of draft	29 February 2012
Approved by	Tony Dowd, Director MENA	Date approved in AidWorks	1 March 2012
This QAI assessment is based on the outcome of an independent evaluation: <i><If "yes", enter quality ratings only, no narrative, and ensure evaluation report is attached in AidWorks.></i>			

Description (no more than 300 words per cell)

Description	<p>What is it?</p> <p>Phase 2 of the Australia Middle East NGO Cooperation Agreement (AMENCA2) is a five-year \$30M program under which four Australian NGOs (World Vision, ActionAid, APHEDA and Care) and partner Palestinian NGOs implement activities of Palestinians (particularly women, children and youth) by improving livelihoods, access to basic services and strengthening the capacities of Palestinian NGOs. In mid-2011, each NGO conducted a Mid-Term Review of their projects. An external Mid Term Review of the program and an independent Financial Review were also conducted in October 2011.</p>
Objectives Summary	<p>What are we doing?</p> <p>AMENCA2 has four program components that directly support the program goal:</p> <p>Component 1: Reducing vulnerability Objective: To improve livelihoods and/or access to basic services.</p> <p>Component 2: Capacity building Objective: To build the capacity of local Palestinian NGOs.</p> <p>Component 3: Program capacity development Objective: To build and promote Program capacity.</p> <p>Component 4: Program management Objective: To manage the Program effectively.</p>

Australian Aid – Rated Quality Criteria

Criteria	Assessment (no more than 300 words per cell)	Rating (1-6)	Management Response Be as precise as possible: what? how? who (AusAID)? when? (no more than 300 words per cell)
1. Relevance	<p>Why are we doing this?</p> <p>AMENCA2 contributes to AusAID's Palestinian Territories Program Strategy which was approved by the Director General in December 2010.</p> <p>The Program aims to reduce the socio-economic vulnerability of the Palestinian people and has a particular focus on supporting the empowerment of women. Project activities include support to micro-enterprise, small income generating activities and agricultural development.</p> <p>The Program's focus supports the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Program contributes directly to the MDGs of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. AMENCA2 directly supports AusAID's Palestinian Territories Delivery Strategy (2011-2016) through its focus on helping vulnerable Palestinians develop and sustain livelihoods.</p> <p>AMENCA2 supports the nurturing of a well-integrated community. By building the capacities of Palestinian institutions and organisations it contributes to the development of a well-functioning civil society.</p> <p>AMENCA2 supports small villages through providing advice, training and mentoring to small local Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in the planning and management of activities, advice on the delivery of services and particularly improving opportunities for women's participation.</p>	5	<p>In March 2012, AusAID will hold an annual Program and Planning Workshop with AMENCA2 NGO partners to develop AMENCA2's strategic priorities and planning as it enters its third year.</p> <p>AusAID also plans to hold High Level Consultations with the Palestinian Authority in the first quarter of 2012. At this meeting, AusAID will discuss AMENCA2's progress and the role of NGO partners and civil society.</p>
2. Effectiveness	<p>How is it going? Will it work?</p> <p>AMENCA2 is a multi-year program. An external program-level Mid-Term Review of AMENCA2 found that project activities are progressing well and good results are being achieved, particularly in the area of livelihood support. The findings of the Australian NGO Mid Term Reviews also mirrored this view and noted that projects are achieving their intended outputs and producing unintended benefits for local communities.</p> <p>The program-level Mid Term Review found "a strong sense of success at the level of individual communities benefitting from the program." Local know-how and technology are being generated by projects in different ways. Access to new resources (e.g. new seeds, bee-keeping) is invigorating community action. Projects are stimulating a culture of enterprise, overcoming fatalism and supporting the creation of new forms of employment. The effectiveness of the Program has increased its capacity to decrease vulnerability, increase livelihoods and strengthen NGO institutional capacities.</p>	5	<p>AusAID recognises the importance of the role of NGO activities within this Program and through direct communication, evaluation and reporting, will continue to effectively coordinate with Australian and Palestinian partner NGOs to ensure that AMENCA2 progress is monitored and project goals achieved.</p> <p>AusAID's external Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Adviser conducted a monitoring visit in the first quarter of 2012. During this visit, the Adviser provided M&E support to NGO partners and assessed the status of project activities. The Annual Synthesis Report will be released in April 2012.</p>

Criteria	Assessment (no more than 300 words per cell)	Rating (1-6)	Management Response Be as precise as possible: what? how? who (AusAID)? when? (no more than 300 words per cell)
3. Efficiency	<p>Is it working smoothly?</p> <p>AusAID is managing its key partnerships efficiently in support of the achievement of AMENCA2 objectives. Inputs, in terms of funds, staff and other resources are appropriate for the objectives and delivery mode. Projects are delivering outputs within stated timeframes and substantial benefits are being obtained.</p> <p>The Program has not suffered from major delays in implementation. Individual activities have responded well to difficulties. Potential risks (political instability, Israeli military incursions, Palestinian-Israeli conflict) are being monitored by AusAID and NGO partners.</p> <p>NGOs in Gaza need to maintain flexible arrangements and manage project activities carefully. They liaise closely with UNRWA when appropriate; however, they avoid and/or minimise contact with Hamas authorities. World Vision is particularly sensitive to volatility in Gaza and the impact of Hamas on NGO activity there. Ma'an Development Center is working with APHEDA in Gaza and has a good understanding of the political context. The Mid Term Review found that the implementation of AMENCA2 has been particularly effective because of the flexibility of NGOs and cited two examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ma'an Development Center's re-design of a home garden to increase production; and • The change of implementing partners by World Vision following the unexpected ousting of Sharek from Gaza was done smoothly and without disturbance to project progress. 	4	<p>AusAID has developed timeframes for each project activity to ensure the program runs efficiently. Partner NGOs are required to report any delays in implementation. AusAID, in partnership with the partner NGOs, monitor potential risks to project implementation to minimise impact to the program. Management also provides good strategic oversight and direction to ensure efficiency in the areas of planning, implementation and monitoring.</p>
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>How do we know?</p> <p>Individual project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks that are aggregated to form an overarching framework for the program. Each project M&E system takes into account the unique locations of projects and their specific implementation strategies. Each Australian NGO has established baselines and M&E frameworks with indicators and targets related to baseline data.</p> <p>The addition of an external M&E Adviser position to the project structure has resulted in the development of M&E and a detailed reporting system for each project. All AMENCA NGOs have been able to draw on support in this area from the program level M&E Adviser.</p> <p>The M&E Adviser evaluates AMENCA2 at the program level by monitoring the project in regular in-country visits, liaising with project partners and assessing project level M&E results. M&E arrangements at this level are sufficiently resourced.</p>	5	<p>AusAID has set out specific targets for NGO partners to meet their M&E objectives, and ensure that activity objectives are on track.</p> <p>At a recent meeting with the Australian NGOs (December 2011), AusAID decided that the current M&E program-level framework will remain in place. To strengthen M&E arrangements further, the M&E Adviser will evaluate the M&E capacities by tracking program results and risks. The details of these arrangements will be discussed during the Annual Review and Planning Workshop in March 2012. The M&E Adviser's Annual Synthesis Report will also contribute to strengthening M&E capacity at the individual agency/NGO level.</p> <p>Project level M&E will continue as planned. At the December 2011 meeting, Australian NGOs agreed that M&E reporting will differentiate between the achievement of activities and outputs (which are tracked in quantitative terms and lead to input/output comparisons) and the achievement of outcomes.</p> <p>In the first quarter of 2012, the M&E Adviser is scheduled to visit partner NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza to discuss the status of project activities and evaluate local M&E arrangements.</p>
5. Sustainability	<p>Will benefits last?</p> <p>Development progress in the Palestinian Territories in general is highly dependent on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.</p> <p>Despite these circumstances, sustainability in the short to medium term is reasonable. The Program is creating effective local assets and strong local ownership. Other strengths of the projects include community engagement. Projects are building the capacity of local development agencies to bring long lasting benefits, particularly in terms of common programming, training and understanding. The project level Mid Term Reviews (October '11) found that activities are building resilience by insulating communities from vulnerability.</p> <p>AMENCA2's focus on small-scale decentralised activities should improve the likelihood that some benefits will be sustained even if the political and security situation deteriorates. If the political and security environment improves, there is a very strong likelihood of long term benefits.</p>	4	<p>AusAID has ensured that sustainability considerations are built into the partnership model for the program. AusAID is working with Australian NGOs to strengthen the links between the capacity building components and the livelihood strategies of each project.</p> <p>At the project level, ActionAid will strengthen the sustainability of Community Based Organisations by improving their capacity to fundraise, build durable volunteer programs and generate income.</p> <p>Projects need to continue to monitor the benefits of activities, and the recommendations made in the Australian NGO Mid-Term Reviews need to be implemented over the course of the project to ensure that benefits last. AusAID, through the work of its external M&E Adviser will work with the NGOs to ensure that this is achieved.</p>

Criteria	Assessment (no more than 300 words per cell)	Rating (1-6)	Management Response Be as precise as possible: what? how? who (AusAID)? when? (no more than 300 words per cell)
6. Gender Equality	<p>How are we achieving it?</p> <p>Improving the lives of women is a particular aspect of AMENCA2 and an objective that receives strong support from each NGO. This is reflected in the specific gender-related program level outcome themes. At the project level, specifically designed initiatives and interventions ensure better impact on women. Several NGOs are working through local women's Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to guarantee women's participation.</p> <p>Women are venturing outside their traditional roles for the first time to become involved in the various project activities. The social empowerment that accompanies women's economic empowerment is having wider positive impacts on the broader community.</p> <p>By providing women recipients with loans for small businesses, Asala's project increased the status of women in society and provided them with personal empowerment. These income generating activities, which were originally designed to reduce vulnerability, also increased the incomes of households. Training is being adapted to local women's needs and aiming to increase their decision-making power and mobility in society. In light of their achievements in the area of gender equality and in recognition of the strategic focus of the Asala project, ActionAid is building capacity to address empowerment issues.</p>	5	<p>AusAID in a February 2011 visit to the Palestinian Territories advocated greater involvement of women and progress towards gender equality. At a recent meeting with Australian NGOs in December 2011, AusAID advised continued strengthening of gender across all projects.</p> <p>In its Mid Term Review of Ma'an Development Centre's project, APHEDA recommended greater involvement of women in decision-making and ensuring they have equitable access to participating and benefiting from the project to provide long term sustainability. CARE's Mid Term Review of the <i>Tatweer</i> Project noted the need for a systematic way to target women and advised strengthening expertise in this area. In its Annual Report, CARE will reflect on how its Women's Empowerment Framework applies to the project.</p> <p>All AMENCA2 projects would benefit from further analysis on how to engage women beyond the household level. AusAID will continue to monitor progress against gender indicators over the course of the program and will determine to what extent the Mid Term Review recommendations on gender are being implemented.</p>

Other Key Issues

Criteria	Assessment (no more than 300 words)		Management Response Be as precise as possible: what? how? who (AusAID)? when? (no more than 300 words)
7. Cross-Cutting Issues and Commitments	<p>What else is at stake?</p> <p>The cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, inclusion of people with disabilities and the environment are well integrated across all activities within the Program. People with disabilities are also considered in the beneficiary selection criteria for project activities.</p> <p>AMENCA2 projects are addressing food security and environmental issues through interventions and initiatives to ensure impact on targeted groups. Projects are contributing to food security by supporting agricultural and home garden activities. Projects are also contributing to land rehabilitation, water harvesting, organic farming practices, and the use of low-input agriculture with minimal environmental impacts. These activities may increase local capacities to resist the negative impacts of climate change and disaster risk reduction.</p>		<p>In a meeting with Australian NGOs in December 2011, AusAID reiterated the need for NGOs to make a distinction between the differing objectives of targeting/empowering women and consideration of gender as a cross cutting issue. This is a gap in a number of the projects.</p>
8. Risk to Highlight	<p>What needs attention?</p> <p>Gaza: Security advice often restricts the ability of project evaluators to enter and to stay in Gaza for extended periods. The restricted entry times imposed by Israeli military authorities also infringes the capacity of external evaluators and others to monitor AMENCA2 activities in Gaza, or to discuss issues in person with project staff.</p> <p>NGOs: The Palestinian Authority and Hamas have both been working to increase their control over NGO activities. This may mean that these authorities require prior approval of NGO programs and activities in the future.</p>	<p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p>	<p>AusAID will continue to pay close attention to activities in Gaza. AusAID plans to allocate more time to the M&E Adviser to visit Gaza to assess the status of projects there and in preparation for the drafting of the Annual Synthesis Report.</p> <p>AusAID will continue to encourage NGOs to liaise and coordinate closely with PA activities in the West Bank, and for those operating in Gaza to minimise areas of potential conflict with Hamas.</p>
9. Current Issues	<p>Other things to know</p> <p>The Palestinian Authority and Hamas are paying increasing attention to local NGO activities, with indications of a desire by both authorities to gain additional approval (and potentially control) of programs and a move to tighter VAT requirements.</p>		<p>AusAID will continue to monitor the impact of encroaching control by the PA and Hamas and, if relevant, discuss these issues at this year's High Level Consultations.</p>

Key Results *(no more than 300 words)*

10. Key Results	<p>So what?</p> <p>AMENCA2 is improving the livelihoods of hundreds of direct recipients and their beneficiaries through a range of small scale activities tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable communities. Examples of key achievements at the end of year 2 in the areas of micro-business, CBOs, food security and livelihood security include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 4,071 community members accessed CBO services with a 50% increase in the number of people accessing services by gender.2. 175 women access vocational training/skills enhancement opportunities: 20% of whom secured employment as a result of training received.3. Food security interventions have produced a 10% increase in male and female headed household income.4. 80% of beneficiaries reported that the food security interventions directly addressed their families' needs.5. 4,000 farmers provided with 1m seedlings.6. 300 farmers received inputs for a greenhouse rehabilitation activity with 200 trained in greenhouse rehabilitation. <p>In its first two years of implementation, AMENCA2 has set a strong basis to have a continued positive impact in people's lives. Each project is addressing clear access needs, including access to water, to quality/available agricultural inputs and to community services.</p>
------------------------	---

Considerations for preparing the report

These prompts are not exhaustive, nor do you have to answer each question. They are a guide only and should complement other relevant considerations identified by the program team. For further details on completing this report see the Guideline [Complete a QAI Report](#).

Description of the Activity - "What is it?"

Provide a brief, clear description of the activity, and any related sub-activities, assuming the reader has no prior knowledge. This includes clear indication of the approach(es) taken and modality(ies) by which it is being delivered. Doing so will frame the assessment to follow and help a reader to contextualise the progress toward objectives, with implementation, any management responses identified, as well as relative significance of any key results claimed.

Objectives summary – "What are we doing?"

Briefly (in not more than eight lines) summarise the activity objectives against which the activity is assessed.

- An objective is defined as "a specific statement setting out what an activity is expected to achieve by a given time", and provides the primary basis for judging the success of the activity.
- the number of objectives should be limited to ensure focus on the priority outcomes to be achieved.
- For many AusAID activities this information is listed under the "Purpose" section of the activity Design Document or in the monitoring and evaluation framework. If the activity has been subjected to a Quality and Entry reporting process, refer to the QAE report for its summary of objectives.

Relevance – "Why are we doing this?"

- Does the specific role and intended contribution of Australian aid through this activity (aid objectives) to the Partner's priority development outcomes remain clear, relevant and appropriate?
 - if not, or if partner priorities or institutional contexts have changed, or are changing, how will this activity fit or adapt?
- Does the activity target priority needs not addressed by other development partners, and/or how is Australia otherwise seeking to harmonise its assistance?
- Is the activity contributing as planned to the higher level objectives of the Australian aid program as outlined in relevant country, regional and thematic strategy?
 - if not, or if Australian program objectives have changed, or are changing, how will this activity fit or adapt?
- Does the activity remain relevant to the context/needs of beneficiaries?
 - does the proposed approach to addressing the identified development issues (including the modality and financing arrangements) continue to match the context and operational reality, as much as any specific analysis underpinning the design?
 - where an adviser position exists, does the adviser position's technical and/or capacity objectives continue to match the needs identified in the activity design?
- If working with/through another partner (e.g. UN, WB, PIFS), consider *both* the relevance of Australian objectives for the partnership, (why we chose to work this way) and the partner's aid objective(s) *vis a vis* the development context, partner priorities and beneficiaries' needs?

Effectiveness – "How is it going? Will it work?"

- How clear, measurable and achievable are the objectives for this activity (aid objectives) within the stated timeframe? Has anything changed that affects this?
- Is the activity achieving the objectives expected **at this stage** and is it likely to achieve its intended objectives **by completion**?
 - where an adviser position exists, is the adviser position achieving the technical and/or capacity objectives expected in the timeframe planned?
 - are the pre-conditions in place for results to continue to be achieved over time?
- As a result, what evidence is there at this stage, of the activity's contribution to higher level objectives/outcomes of the program?
- Is how we think change will occur being validated by implementation?
- If not, what changes need to be made to objectives and/or approaches so that the desired change might occur?
- Are the main risks to achievement of aid objectives identified, monitored and are plans to prevent or mitigate them being acted on?
- How well are we managing key partnerships which may contribute to achieving objectives?
- If working through partners (e.g. UN, WB, and PIFS), how are Australia's objective(s) for the partnership progressing (often defined through partnership frameworks)? And how are the partners progressing with their own aid objectives?

Efficiency – "Is it working smoothly?"

- Is the activity making efficient use of time and resources to achieve activity objectives and outcomes?
- Do technical solutions and associated implementation arrangements remain high quality, appropriate to the context and good value for money?
 - where an adviser position exists, does it remain good value for money? And where appropriate, have other ways of realising the objectives of the position been explored/considered?

- Has the activity suffered from any delays in implementation, whether against the implementation plan, the budget, or both? If so, why, with what consequence to the objectives, and what is being/was done about it?
- Is the activity adequately and appropriately resourced to achieve the desired objectives?
- Are roles and responsibilities of, and communications between, all development partners and all actors involved in activity implementation clear and how well are they working?
- Where appropriate, are implementation arrangements harmonised with other donors and aligned with partner government systems?
- Has management of the activity been responsive to changing needs and managed risks to achieving objectives?

Monitoring and Evaluation – “How do we know?” (Programs might find the *interim guidance on activity level monitoring and evaluation* helpful when assessing this criterion.)

- Do monitoring and evaluation arrangements provide timely and meaningful information in support of management, accountability and lessons-learning needs?
- Is monitoring and evaluation focused on priority information needs and not overly complex?
- Is it clear what will be assessed, by whom, when and how (including baselines where appropriate and realistic)?
- Is data gender-disaggregated to measure the impact of the activity on men and women, boys and girls?
- Does evidence exist to show that activity objectives are on track to being achieved, and to what extent changes will be sustained? Can this also inform analysis and judgement of contribution to/achievement against higher level objectives of the program?
- Where we are jointly implementing with other partners and/or funders, are there *AusAID specific objectives* for engagement in the activity/partnership, and do monitoring and evaluation arrangements address this?
- Do monitoring and evaluation arrangements use, or contribute to strengthening, local monitoring and evaluation systems and/or capacity? If strengthening the capacity of partner M&E is an *objective of the activity*, is this being tracked and managed accordingly? (Note this would then need to be identified in the Objectives summary and assessed against “Effectiveness”.)
- Given all these considerations, is monitoring and evaluation adequately resourced?

Sustainability – “Will benefits last?” (Programs might find *interim guidance on assessing sustainability* helpful when assessing this criterion and considering related management actions.)

- Is it clear what sustainable benefits/change the activity aims to generate? Is sustainability in fact an aim of, or reasonably achievable by, the activity?
- If it is, are strategies for achieving sustainability explicit? To what extent are they being acted on?
 - are they integral to the activity objectives, and being measured and assessed?
- What confidence is there at this stage that any benefits/changes the activity is generating will endure? Assess in terms of either or both:
 - outcomes – what the activity is aiming to achieve, and what it would take to sustain that?
 - processes – how the activity is operating, and what it would take for that to continue?
- Are specific constraints to sustainability of the activity identified and being addressed?
 - this should include consideration of financial, human resource and political constraints
- Do beneficiaries and/or partner country stakeholders have sufficient ownership, capacity and resources to maintain the activity outcomes after Australian Government funding has ceased? Has anything changed for the better or worse?
- Where an adviser position exists, is there an agreed capacity transition/ exit plan and is this progressing as planned?
- How well are any emerging environmental, climate and disaster challenges (e.g. extreme weather events, resource degradation, pollution, disasters and climate change related impacts) or opportunities (e.g. for Disaster Risk Reduction or adaptation) being addressed in activity implementation?
- How well is the activity building resilience to cope with changing conditions and future uncertainties?
- How is the activity ensuring no significant negative environmental impacts are likely (including complying with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act) and how is it pursuing opportunities to enhance the environment?
- How is monitoring and evaluation being used to assess and report on environmental sustainability of the activity?

Gender equality – “How are we achieving it?”

- How well does the activity integrate gender equality into objectives and the consideration of risks and sustainability?
- What progress has been made on addressing/resolving any gender equality issues identified at design? Or identified subsequently?
- Does the activity access gender expertise for implementation?
- What progress has been made on the development of capacity regarding gender equality objectives of: program staff; counterparts; development partners; and/or the broader community?
- How are gender equality considerations and impacts discussed at the policy level and with counterparts at the program level?
- Is the monitoring and evaluation assessing and reporting on progress towards desired gender equality outcomes and impact?
- How well does the activity contribute to advancing gender equality?

Cross-cutting issues – “What else is at stake?”

Discuss whether/how this activity contributes to AusAID’s policy commitments on aid effectiveness (Paris/Accra/Cairns Compact in the Pacific), use of government systems, anti-corruption, as well as cross-cutting thematic issues such as HIV/AIDS, environment and climate change, disability, or other AusAID or Australian Government policy commitments, as relevant.

This section should provide meaningful information, across the country and thematic programs, of plans, monitoring and results which show adherence with and/or progress towards these aid policy commitments. Specific details of relevant outputs, outcomes or activities rather than generalities should be provided, and, where possible, track progress towards defined objectives in these areas. For instance:

- Does the program have an anti-corruption action plan, and/or commitment in the country strategy? How does this activity support this? What internal anti-corruption strategies has this activity adopted, and how are these progressing?

Risk management – “What needs attention?”

This section should identify **only specific risks requiring higher level management attention**, as determined by the assessment and/or other relevant information available. Consideration should especially include reputational risks such as environmental, social, child protection, corruption or political concerns related to the activity.

A simple scale is used Red/Amber/Green to flag the significance of the risk, taken as a combination of its likelihood and consequences. Use the rating to help you communicate with senior management. AusAID actions to manage and mitigate the risk should be clear. This section should not usually cover country-level risks unless they directly influence the ability to achieve activity outcomes.

Key Results – “So what?”

This is the chance to communicate the things that matter most about this activity. Though it should represent the “headlines” it is deliberately reserved as the last word in the process. The preceding reflection and assessment against the quality criteria should help make clear what *difference* the activity is making or has made. This section should tell the story of the results of progress towards aid objectives through implementation of the activity to date. This might duplicate assessment against the “Effectiveness” criterion, but should be pitched at a public audience.

- Be selective, highlighting key achievements which tell a story, rather than long lists.
- Link any outputs (e.g. schools built, curriculum developed) to outcomes (e.g. changes in educational achievement and service delivery), to illustrate the relative significance of progress against objectives.
- Include activity level institutional outcomes, such as changes in behaviours and institutional performance.
- Where relevant, make the link between activity results and higher-level country or thematic strategy performance indicators, as well as partner development plans and priorities.
- Include results which were not planned for, if they demonstrate important achievements. For example replication of activity results into government and other programs can be an important sign of development impact. Also note any negative unplanned effects.
- Even at early stages of implementation, assessment should demonstrate attention to achieving development objectives, not just delivering outputs – at later stages it should indicate whether objectives achieved have produced desired immediate outcomes. In between the context of progress with objectives and any key results will be judged in relation to elapsed time and money spent.