LEARN
END OF
CONTRACT
REPORT

LEARN TIMELINE

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to Angelina McIntire, LEARN's number one cheerleader. May we always remember your wisdom to "be where your feet are."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people who have contributed to LEARN's success over the years, but we would like to especially thank all LEARN team members past and present. Of all the LEARNers, we owe a special shout-out to LEARN's first Chief of Party, Piers Bocock, who both had a strong vision for the team he wanted to create and the energy and enthusiasm to make it happen. We also want to acknowledge Dexis leadership for the strong support and space to create a contract as unique as LEARN.

We also owe significant thanks to the entire USAID CLA team past and present; its long-time leader, inaugural CLA Champion, and one of the developers of the LEARN contract, Dr. Stacey Young; and LEARN's three CORs, Thom Sinclair, Monica Matts, and Chelsea Jaccard Kaufman. The CLA team and LEARN were true partners and this would not have been possible without their willingness to walk the talk on CLA with us. This is also true of so many of our buy-in clients and we have truly enjoyed working with you.

Finally, we want to thank ALL of the CLA Champions, you know who you are, for your active engagement and collaboration over the last five and half years—you will write the next chapter of CLA!

COVER PHOTOS
LEFT: Staff from USAID/Ethiopia and USAID/Southern Africa Regional missions participate in the 5-day CLA training at RDMA. **TOP RIGHT:** Staff from USAID/Burma explore the CLA Maturity Tool with a member of the CLA team. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** PIVOT cohort members from African missions consider private sector engagement throughout the Program Cycle. **ALL PHOTOS:** © USAID LEARN

FROM LEARN'S CONTRACTING OFFICER'S REPRESENTATIVE (COR)

Even for those of us who have worked in international development for years, the LEARN Contract seemed special. In fact, people familiar with the contract often talked about LEARN having "a special sauce," something that made it really different from what we've all seen before, and wondered how it was made. Even if you haven't heard of LEARN's special sauce, you're in for a treat because they're going to lay out the ingredients that went into it and how it came together—how the USAID CLA team and LEARN became seamless purveyors of CLA goodness over the life of the contract. The groundwork of the collaborative work process was already laid when I joined the CLA team in May 2017. I benefited from the amazing, intentional environment that my USAID and LEARN colleagues created before me. I was witness to how the sauce was made and it has fundamentally changed me as a COR, as a USAID staff member, and as a development practitioner.

While I, as the COR, met regularly with LEARN, each of my colleagues (seven of us on the USAID CLA team) managed workstreams that also worked directly with LEARN colleagues, creating such a connected web of overlap/interplay that on average, there were at least ten touchpoints between the CLA team (not just the COR) and LEARN per week, not to mention special time-bound projects and ad hoc meetings. The integration between the CLA team and LEARN cannot be overemphasized. We worked together, we got to know each other, we liked each other, we co-created together. We made this sauce together.

LEARN was a spectacular mix of creative and task-oriented individuals that produced exceptional quality work that consistently improved USAID's core business practices. This contract created lasting change, with their ability to walk the talk, their dedication to the practice, their creativity, their flexibility, and ultimately, the fact that they hired the right people that are just fun and that others want to be around! I have never before and probably never again will work on a contract with such stellar adaptive managers with excellent, transparent communication skills that inspire their team to be greater than the sum of their parts. Dexis, the company that implemented the contract, trusted the LEARN leadership team to hire the right people and run things a little differently, but it has paid off in spades. Managing this award has been one of the highlights of my career.

Our lasting challenge will be to ensure that the CLA practice can continue to make connections and grow so that, together, we build a broader system in which CLA is so ingrained that it is indistinguishable from the system itself. In other words, CLA is just the way that USAID does business. If you read this report and try out any of the below mentioned practices and tools, you will be a part of that process. Thank you.

Let's create the CLA-infused system together and find ways to use our own special sauce to do better development!

Chelsea Jaccard Kaufman
LEARN Contracting Officer's Representative (COR)
USAID/PPL/LER
Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) team
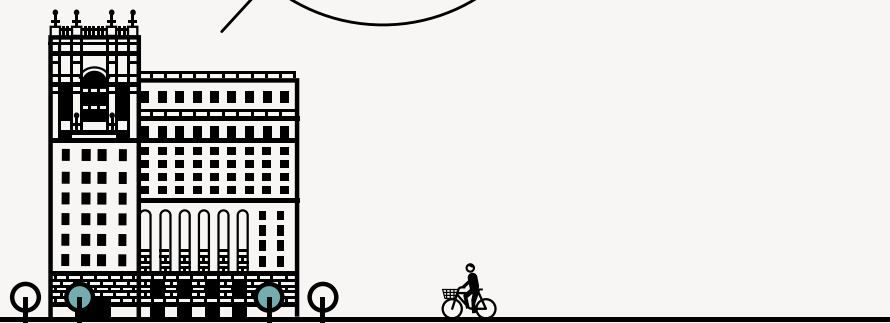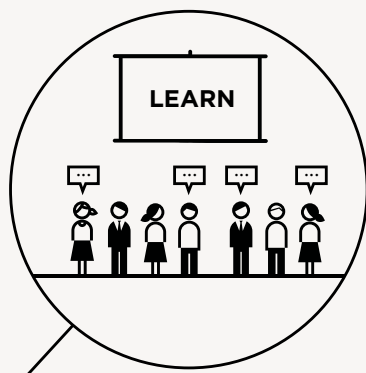
LEARN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September of 2014, USAID's Office of Learning, Evaluation & Research (LER) awarded the Learning and Knowledge Management (LEARN) contract to Dexis Consulting Group and subcontractor RTI International.[1] This document—the End of Contract Report—captures five and half years of results and reflections for our stakeholders. Our intention is to share the good and the bad, and while this report would not be considered a "tell all," we think we have a story worth sharing, particularly to USAID CORs and AORs, activity managers, and other implementers of institutional support contracts.[2]

LEARN's primary purpose was to support organizational change at USAID. More specifically, the contract was focused on helping USAID staff integrate collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) approaches into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs (what is known at USAID as the Program Cycle). It was clear that most USAID staff, whether they realized it or not, were already integrating CLA into their work to some extent. The focus of our efforts, therefore, was to make those practices more systematic, intentional, resourced, and ultimately more widespread throughout the Agency, which would have a ripple effect on implementing partners and even other stakeholders, such as host country governments. This was based on the theory—later borne out by evidence—that by becoming a better learning organization, USAID could be a more effective development organization. And that theory brought the USAID CLA team within USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning & Learning (PPL) and LEARN contractors together, driven by a shared purpose of improving how USAID does business.

LEARN was designed based on this belief and, as you might expect from a learning-oriented contract, began with more questions than answers. Primary among those questions was: *could an institutional support contract do more than carry out requested services—could it actually accelerate positive organizational change at USAID? And if so, how and under what conditions?*

This report strives to answer these questions and the many related sub-questions:

- What changes did LEARN contribute to at USAID? Who created the changes? How did they come to be? And what enabled those changes? (Chapter 1: Contributions Toward Impact)
- How did we operate internally as the LEARN contract and with our clients to affect change in the wider USAID system? (Chapter 2: Walking the Talk of CLA)

1   Dexis' original partner was IRG that later became Engility and was eventually absorbed by RTI International.

2   For those not familiar with how USAID manages programs, the day-to-day interaction between implementers and USAID is through the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for contracts or the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) for grants and cooperative agreements. Institutional support mechanisms or contracts are specific types of agreements carried out by implementing partners but done in very close collaboration with USAID clients.

In Chapter 1, you'll find out more about what we were able to achieve as a result of our partnership with the CLA team and 32 buy-in clients from across the Agency and 14 USAID missions (see Annex A for the full list of buy-ins). When we began in 2014, very little was documented about what CLA was or how to do it. We knew of 32 missions that were collaborating, learning, or adapting in relatively small ways. By late 2015, the CLA team and LEARN co-created the CLA Framework and CLA Maturity Tool that provided common language for CLA and articulated how it could show up in and support our work. Building off this foundation, we worked throughout the contract to show that CLA was an effective set of practices to improve organizational effectiveness and development results. By the contract's end in early 2020, LEARN had collected robust examples from 61 USAID missions of their systematic, intentional, and resourced approach to CLA via the CLA Case Competition; had worked with all of the Agency's technical and regional bureaus on CLA integration; had catalogued hundreds of instances of CLA integration; and had amassed an over 500-person strong CLA Community of Practice within the Agency. Beyond the numbers, we had countless stories and qualitative feedback from our clients and stakeholders that CLA integration was creating positive change in their teams and units.

You'll also see in Chapter 1 our realization (which seems painfully obvious but is overlooked by so many) that people create organizational change; they either decide to work in certain ways or don't. It comes down to the decisions they make and behaviors they exhibit day in, day out. Therefore, at the heart of LEARN's theory of change is the notion that individual CLA champions within the Agency are the key drivers of individual behavior change, which is a necessary precursor to organizational change. Our core work then became more focused on identifying, supporting, and strengthening the capacity of CLA champions across the Agency. We provided them with evidence that intentional CLA efforts lead to more effective development programming; facilitated learning-based processes that strengthened USAID's Program Cycle; and developed and curated CLA tools and resources, training, and communities to build CLA skills and capacity.

But as you'll see in Chapter 2, we couldn't have done this if we didn't have our own house in order. From Day 1, we set out to create a different kind of contract with a different kind of team. We wanted to test the theory that if we made it fun and interesting to come to work each day, staff would be more invested in the long-term success of the contract, and that ultimately we would be more effective in achieving our results. That meant we first had to get the right people.

We were hiring for alignment of values, the ability to work collaboratively, and the drive to continuously learn and improve.

This enabled us to create a team of knowledge management and organization development professionals who were committed to walking the talk on CLA. We had a leadership team that was passionate about enabling those practices to flourish by providing a backbone for our culture and processes. We didn't just talk about it—we did it. And no, we didn't get it right all the time; there were inevitable workplace conflicts, times of stress, and people with whom we parted ways. But we were intentional about the type of team environment we were trying to create, and all of that was based on CLA values and practices. We tested and used what we created for clients on ourselves. This enabled us to be genuine in our delivery and understanding of what it takes for USAID staff to implement CLA practices. By being intentional about our own CLA practice, we learned that a commitment to our values in how we work was just as important as what we produced.

Throughout LEARN, USAID colleagues and other friends and family of the contract would ask us: what are you doing to create this team environment? Some even called it "the LEARN special sauce." (Seriously, other people said that; we're not *that arrogant*.) Well, Chapter 2 gives away the special sauce, ingredients and all. We hope it helps those who want to bring CLA practices into their team and how they manage. We know, based on our experience, that it makes all the difference and so we offer up some key recommendations to our readers based on that experience. We hope it will inform how you approach organizational change efforts at USAID and other institutions or activity management and implementation.

Whatever change you are trying to make, we strongly believe that it must begin internally. Development work is essentially a change endeavor—we intend to create positive change at the individual, institutional, and/or community levels. But are we—as catalysts for that change— modeling what we hope to see when we engage with clients, partners, or stakeholders? This was the backbone of our approach. It wasn't always perfect, but we were intentional about trying and corrected internally when we thought we weren't living up to those values and approaches.

This doesn't just apply to a CLA change effort—it can be anything. We are inspired by other examples of partners walking the talk. For example, USAID/Vietnam, which manages a sizable

Work top-down and bottom-up.

USAID Program Cycle

environment portfolio, issued a mandatory clause in all its agreements disallowing any expenses for single-use plastics. So when you go to an event hosted by the mission, you can't find a plastic water bottle anywhere. Another inspiring example is CARE's work in Mali to improve gender relations at the community level. When CARE staff noticed that it was hard for them to get communities to change their behavior around gender, they decided to examine their own behavior first. They realized their own staff weren't living what they were promoting in the community. This led to an intentional focus on encouraging change internally and using that experience to more authentically catalyze change in communities.

Most importantly, if you have no resources or authority to implement the change you seek, start with yourself first by modeling. Based on our experience, it's the cheapest and possibly one of the more effective ways to start a change process that can pique interest from others and have a ripple effect.

Now, if you do find yourself with access to authority and resources, it's important to work both top-down and bottom-up. Meaning, put in place the top-down institutional requirements and incentive for change with enough flexibility to let staff at the frontlines figure out how to implement that change in their context. In tandem, focus on unleashing bottom-up action from champions throughout the institution.

For example, in our case, PPL updated the Program Cycle Operational Policy (ADS 201) in 2016, making CLA a required and central part of the USAID Program Cycle. In addition, the spirit of the policy heavily promoted evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management. At the same time, while missions were now required to do CLA, how they did it was at their discretion. It depended on the nature of their work, local context, and how CLA could help them be more effective—there was no "one size fits all" approach.

To create and support bottom-up action, USAID responsibly invested in the change effort by sufficiently resourcing the LEARN mechanism. Our work supported the bottom-up changes by supporting existing and creating new CLA champions, who now had access to key messages, tools, training, and opportunities for peer learning. We also recognized these champions as leaders in CLA.
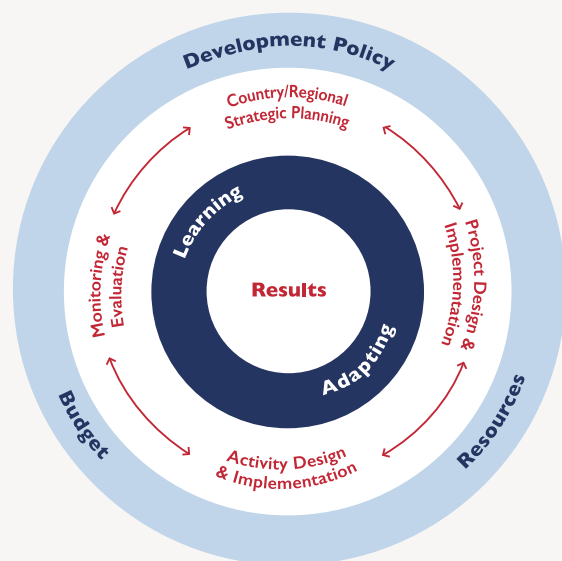
> At the beginning (and always), focus on people. Once you make progress, focus on changing processes.

Our contract also enabled other USAID operating units to use their offices' resources to buy into the LEARN mechanism. This meant that staff across the Agency had access to technical expertise in CLA (and related process facilitation, organization development, Program Cycle processes, knowledge management, communications, etc.) that was used to both strengthen their capacity in CLA and help them facilitate more effective processes.

Our focus on individual champions within the Agency became clearer in Year 2 once we had an updated strategy and results framework based on our experience up until that point.

We still strongly believe that any change effort should focus on individual champions, leveraging their social capital and capacity to create change within their teams or units. But if you only focus on individuals, will you be able to sustain change in the face of the significant staff rotation and turnover that our organizations and operating units constantly experience? It became clear that sustainability would be best achieved by working with champions to create, facilitate, and cement better business processes, whether they be activity design, strategy development, portfolio review, stakeholder consultation, co-creation, etc. All of these processes could be improved and CLA approaches could help. The further into the contract we got, especially with significant buy-ins from other parts of the Agency, we saw the need to move beyond focusing solely on individuals and to invest in moving the needle on redesigning business processes so that they were intentionally collaborative, learning-focused, and agile, leading to better results.

It's worth noting that we didn't have all this figured out up front. We were learning as we were going—"building the plane as we were flying it," as some might say. That had its advantages (staying agile, responsive) and disadvantages (not everyone was always on the same plane). In fact, the process of creating this report led us to new learning. After five and half years, we were still having ah-ha moments. We hope, as you read this, you will too.

Happy learning, on behalf of the entire LEARN team!

Sarah Schmidt
LEARN Chief of Party

Monalisa Salib
Deputy Chief of Party

CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This report is intended to be both a reflection of LEARN's learnings from our five and a half years and a practical resource for the reader that tells you more about the "how" and "why" of what we did in hopes that you, the reader, might try and apply it to your change effort.

Throughout the report—especially in the **Try This!** and **Check It Out!** features in the left sidebar —we have included numerous links and call-outs that point you to useful resources and tools. The left sidebar also highlights relevant findings from the evidence base for CLA (EB4CLA) with links directly to the research we curated and the syntheses we produced—look for the **Evidence Shows…** sections to learn more.

The right sidebar is an interactive table of contents. Click on the various headings to jump around in the document. The home icon at the top right will take you back to the top of the report.

Also of special note is the LEARN timeline, beginning on , which covers the life of the contract. The timeline is intended to give you a visual overview of LEARN's work, learning, and context. It is divided into three sections: The upper section shows selected achievements, outputs, events, etc. from our more than five and a half years. It also includes some quotes and data points that speak to LEARN's progress at that point in the contract. The middle section highlights key learning and tacit knowledge we gained over time. The lower section makes note of any relevant events happening in the broader context that affected LEARN or the CLA effort at USAID.
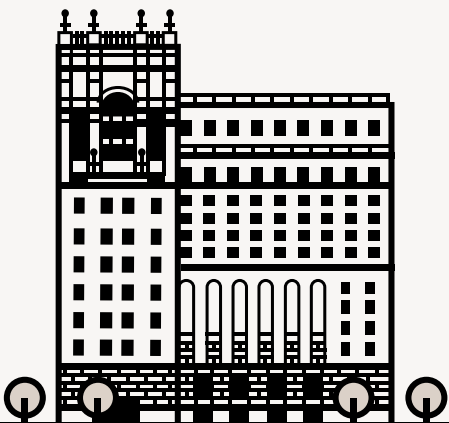
ACRONYMS

AAR	After Action Review		FFP	Office of Food for Peace
ADS	Automated Directives System		FSN	Foreign Service National
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative		GenDev	Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
BAA	Broad Agency Announcement		J2SR	Journey to Self-Reliance
BAR	Before Action Review		KM	Knowledge Management
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy		LER	Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research
COP	Chief of Party		M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting		MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
CoP	Community of Practice		MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative		MTN	Moving the Needle
CRM	Customer Relationship Management		OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party		PIVOT	Practical, InnoVative, On-the-job Training
DFID	UK's Department for International Development		PMP	Performance Management Plan
DFSA	Development Food Security Activity		PPL	Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning
DO	Development Objective		RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance		RF	Results Framework
EB4CLA	Evidence Base for CLA		STIP	Science, Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships
EGEA	Economic Growth, Environment, and Agricultural Division		TDY	Temporary Duty
ERL	Evidence, Research, and Learning		USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
FEVS	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey			

CHAPTER 1:
CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD IMPACT

INTRODUCTION

LEARN started as a question: could an institutional support contract do more than carry out requested services—could it actually accelerate organizational change at USAID?

At the start, we did not know the answer to that question and eagerly began exploring the system in which we were operating. We engaged in a months-long tacit knowledge capture process (see page 52 for more on tacit knowledge capture) with our USAID clients and existing CLA champions in the Agency. Our intent was to discover what the state of CLA was, what was working, what the pain points were, and what we didn't know.

The knowledge we gathered informed our initial focus: helping PPL clearly define CLA to build a shared conceptual framework across the Agency and with implementing partners. The resulting CLA Framework brought a shared language to the effort that created an opening for crucial conversations, aided by the creation of the CLA Maturity Tool, about how USAID and partners were designing and implementing programs in collaborative, learning-oriented, and adaptive ways.

A shared language and conceptual framework was necessary but not sufficient to create change. We needed to reach the people actually carrying out the work—the staff at USAID and their partners. How could CLA make their work more effective? How could we help change their behavior to better integrate CLA practices throughout the Program Cycle? How could we affect change at the individual level?

This led us to the creation of a new results framework in Year 2 of the contract after deeper reflection on what was (and wasn't) working in Year 1. Based on our reflections, we pivoted towards behavior change methodologies, which translated into a need to support existing CLA champions and garner support among new champions. To support these existing and potential champions, we organized our work into three focus areas: building the case that CLA makes a difference to development; facilitating CLA practices and approaches; and building the skills necessary for USAID to sustain CLA practices beyond the end of the contract. If we could accelerate change at the individual level, those champions would go on to do the work of integrating CLA and impact larger work processes and ultimately development outcomes.

LEARN Results Framework
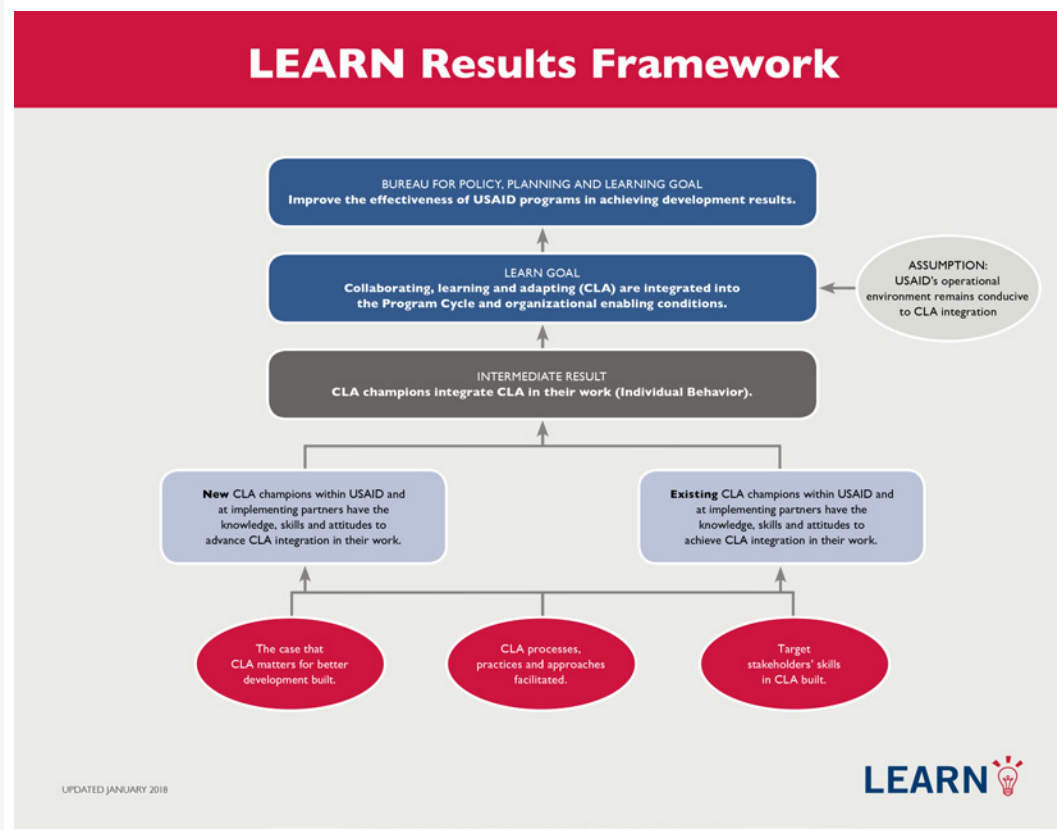
Our hypothesis was that by having shared language, engaging with individual champions who had energy to make change, and supporting them to approach their work with a CLA lens, we could affect organizational change to improve development results.

SHARED LANGUAGE SUPPORTS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Our data demonstrated that a shared conceptualization of CLA serves as an entry point for increased CLA integration. Through the co-creation of the CLA Framework, we catalyzed an understanding of CLA across the Agency. In missions like USAID/Cambodia and others in sub-saharan Africa and the Middle East[3], we observed that introducing a common language for CLA supported an increase in systematic, intentional, and resourced CLA. Ultimately, this increase in CLA integration contributes to improved organizational effectiveness and better development outcomes, as documented in our CLA Evidence Dashboard.

The Development of the CLA Framework

From the beginning of the contract, LEARN set out to help USAID and implementing partners plan and implement context-appropropriate CLA approaches in order to achieve better development results. While the Agency has historically valued and practiced collaborating, learning, and adapting, these practices had not been systematic, sufficiently resourced, or intentional. Part of the reason for this was a lack of shared understanding of and language for CLA practices. When we started, some of the questions USAID and implementing partner staff were asking included: What constitutes CLA? What counts? What doesn't? We are already doing CLA, so what do we need to do differently? How do we get from CLA to better results? What does that pathway look like?

We realized early on that in order to support the Agency in shifting from emergent CLA practices to CLA institutionalization (and essentially spark an organizational change process), **we needed to start with a shared language and framework**. So in 2015, in collaboration with USAID's CLA team, we created the CLA Framework, depicted on page 15.

The CLA Framework[4] articulates USAID's approach to improving organizational learning and helps development partners address common challenges in international development by exploring how we carry out our work. It asks us to consider:

- **Collaborating:** Are we collaborating with the right partners at the right time to promote synergy over siloed efforts?

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3   Please note that we are making explicit references to USAID/Cambodia and USAID/Guatemala in this report because their data on CLA integration is already publicly available via our midterm evaluation. For all other missions, we have left their names out of this report since their data is not publicly available.

4   For more on the CLA Framework, see these resources on USAID Learning Lab.

- **Learning:** Are we asking the most important questions and finding answers that are relevant to decision-making?
- **Adapting:** Are we using the information that we gather through collaboration and learning activities to make better decisions and adjustments?
- **Enabling Conditions:** Are we working in an organizational environment that supports our collaborating, learning, and adapting efforts?

LEARN and the CLA team, also created the CLA Maturity Tool, mapped to the CLA Framework. The tool helps USAID missions and operating units think more deliberately about how to plan for and implement CLA approaches that fit their team or organization's context and needs. They do this through a facilitated, team-based self-assessment and action planning process that uses the tool to guide conversations and identify opportunities to better integrate CLA practices. Over the life of the contract, LEARN facilitated the CLA Maturity Tool with 15 missions and mission-based operating units—including USAID/Jordan, USAID/West Africa, USAID/India, USAID/Peru, and USAID/Cambodia[5]—and several Washington-based operating units in PPL, Food For Peace (FFP), and the Global Development Lab. These sessions were often conducted jointly with the USAID CLA team.

Feedback from USAID missions and operating units following their exposure to the CLA Framework and Maturity Tool reinforces the idea that these resources contributed to shared language and understanding. One Mission Learning Advisor told LEARN, "This was the mission's first interaction with the [tool], and I think it helped a number of people to better conceptualize the answer to the questions of what is CLA? What does it include? What does it not?".

CHECK IT OUT!

Through a set of easy-to-use cards, the CLA Maturity Tool offers examples of what CLA looks like at different stages of maturity to both assess current practice and plan for the future. The tool covers the 16 subcomponents of the CLA Framework. For each subcomponent, the Maturity Tool includes one key concepts and facilitation aid card and five spectrum cards. The key concepts and facilitation aid card broadly describes what the subcomponent covers (front) and offers clarifying explanations helpful in framing the subcomponent (back). The five spectrum cards describe how the subcomponent might show up in your work along a spectrum of practice, ranging from Not Yet Present to Institutionalized.

CLA Maturity Tool

5   The additional missions and mission-based operating units include: Regional Development Mission for Asia, Uganda, Southern Africa Regional, Kenya & East Africa, Rwanda, Senegal, Sahel Regional Office, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan.

CASE STUDY

It All Starts With the Framework: Why Shared Language Mattered for USAID/Cambodia

In 2017, LEARN commissioned a midterm evaluation in order to test our theory of change: CLA champions drive CLA integration. As part of our methodology, LEARN and the researcher selected two cases—USAID/Cambodia and USAID/Guatemala. USAID/Cambodia's story highlights the importance of the CLA Framework in inspiring a more intentional and holistic application of CLA across the mission.

On our first TDY to USAID/Cambodia, we conducted CLA self-assessment and action planning using the CLA Maturity Tool, and on the second TDY, we facilitated a midcourse stocktaking of the mission's strategy. While interviewees noted that CLA had been taking place before these TDYs, they also believed that the self-assessment process helped strengthen the practice of CLA at the mission as exemplified by one interviewee:

"Before the March 2016 TDY, my knowledge of CLA was very limited. The TDY was an opportunity to explore it more. The TDY started with "what is CLA." It's what we've been doing everyday. It's in our DNA. Now when people talk about their activities, I tell them it's the C, or the L, or the A…. For me, now I know I do CLA. It used to be a fancy word. It's not really fancy, I learned. It's what I do."

The shared conceptualization of CLA across USAID/Cambodia also contributed to increased CLA integration in mission documents, processes, and resources, as demonstrated by the following examples of CLA integration at the mission:

- Integrated CLA requirements in new contracts and agreements, the new Office of Public Health and Education Project Appraisal Document, and the existing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan templates by the Program Office.
- Adapted one of the mission's development objectives based on a review of its strategy and relevant data.
- Increased openness across certain offices in discussing enabling conditions such as leadership.
- Identified knowledge gaps in technical programs and implemented assessments to fill these gaps.
- Several offices developed learning focused Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plans with a clearly defined theory of change and plans for using learning to adapt.

USAID/Cambodia is not the only mission where we observed the connection between an improved understanding of CLA and increased CLA integration. Our experiences with other missions offer additional support for the importance of a shared conceptualization of CLA through the CLA Maturity Tool:

- **Creating cross-office integration.** At one sub-Saharan mission, our main point of contact remarked that the conceptualization of CLA helped mission staff make more concrete contributions to the development of the mission's strategy, where CLA played a leading role via an integrated results framework.

- **Strengthening the use of MEL.** In one Middle Eastern mission, we helped to build the CLA capacity of the Program Office and MEL contractor. As a result of our mentoring and capacity building, existing and new CLA champions from the Program Office and the MEL contract adjusted the contract's work plan to introduce the CLA Maturity Tool to implementing partners, including local organizations, and even host government representatives.

- **Focusing on learning to build evidence.** At one large regional mission, this mission developed a mission-wide learning agenda on building regional capacity and hired a CLA Advisor for a technical office. The technical office additionally created a learning agenda, designed a solicitation for a learning award, built CLA into an Annual Program Statement, and conducted more intentional stakeholder mapping.

All of our subsequent efforts to increase CLA integration throughout the Program Cycle were in part made possible by the creation of the CLA Framework and Maturity Tool. The Framework provided a common language for us to share with our USAID clients and development practitioners writ-large, making it possible both to identify and implement CLA approaches. Having that common and clear understanding of CLA made it easier to talk to champions with the shared language (bottom-up), but it also made it easier to make the case and advocate for it to leadership (top-down). Our interactions with various missions specifically support this claim. The CLA Framework, CLA Maturity Tool, and self-assessment and action planning process offered an easy entry point to accelerating organizational change and fulfilling our mission as an institutional support mechanism. As you'll see, however, shared language is not sufficient for creating change; champions need to see value in applying CLA practices and use those practices to better address development challenges.

GOING WHERE THERE IS ENERGY: A FOCUS ON CHAMPIONS AND INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

When we followed up with missions months after sharing the CLA Framework or providing technical assistance, we heard from some that individuals were using CLA practices in their work and from other missions that they weren't. We wanted to know why. Looking across our data, we found four critical reasons that helped explain why CLA caught on:

1. **Openness:** Those who were practicing CLA had an existing curiosity for it that preceded our interactions with them. In other words, they had a willingness and an open mind to try something new. For example, in places where CLA took hold, our team noted that mission staff "were enthusiastic about the self-assessment process," "had a good attitude for CLA; they were humble, there were no turf wars, and there was an appetite for reflection," and were otherwise "CLA-ready" before our engagements with them.

2. **Social influence:** We also realized that the social influence of those we were working with made a difference. In missions, we almost exclusively worked through Program Offices. We saw that missions with effective and well-respected Program Officers (American or local staff) were more likely to move the needle on CLA integration. It was similar in Washington; those with high social influence were able to promote greater CLA integration. High-volume TDYers, for example, who were often requested by missions to support project or activity designs were able to integrate CLA approaches. Others with high social influence in Washington were able to lead learning processes and get their colleagues to attend facilitated reflections.

3. **Sufficient leadership support:** We also found, based on feedback from staff, that leadership support was important, but it was also nuanced. CLA champions told us, for example, they did not need the Mission Director to be an explicit CLA champion; they just needed to avoid blocking or undermining their efforts. In missions, Office Directors were considered an important formal leadership level to have on board; in Washington, Deputy Directors and Directors were also considered important allies.

4. **Experiencing is believing:** We learned from individuals that experiencing CLA firsthand was what really helped them want to try it themselves.[7] When we followed up with missions three and six months after we introduced the CLA Framework to their teams, they shared

7   We learned this through a bi-annual analysis of interview data we collected from the missions we worked with about CLA integration and interviews with our staff who delivered technical assistance.

with us that they learned the most from watching CLA be modeled through our facilitation. Watching others—whether that be LEARN staff, the CLA team, or their fellow teammates—practice CLA further cements the conceptual framework of CLA in their minds, allows them to experience its value to their work, and increases confidence in trying it themselves. This essential change pathway is core to all areas of our work and is a well-supported phenomenon in change management literature.[8]

This learning and insight led us to realize that a shared language and conceptual framework were necessary but not sufficient to create organizational change across the Agency. LEARN needed to refocus its efforts on the core building block of organizational transformation: individual behavior change. We needed people—the staff at USAID and partners who were designing and implementing programs—to bring these shared concepts into their work and apply CLA for better development results. If we could identify, support, and leverage CLA champions, we could help them change their individual behavior and the habits and practices of their teams.

At the same time, our learning indicated that we needed to be targeted and focus our efforts on where there was already energy for CLA by working through existing champions or those who had high potential to become CLA champions. And preferably, again based on our learning, we wanted to work with and through those with high social influence and individuals in leadership positions.

LEARN took a strategic approach to developing champions, emphasizing quality over quantity. LEARN adopted the concept of the tipping point, understanding that mobilizing a smaller number of enthusiastic champions, especially those with formal authority and/or social influence and in contexts with ripe enabling conditions, could more rapidly accelerate culture change towards CLA integration.

These were the insights that inspired the update to our results framework (RF) mentioned earlier. The revision recognized the centrality of individual CLA champions, within USAID and the implementing partner community, to drive change and impact development outcomes. Where the original framework was less specific and focused on institutionalizing CLA in the Program Cycle, the updated RF focused on building the knowledge, skills and abilities of new and existing champions to integrate CLA into their work within the Program Cycle. Part of the idea is that we can work to integrate CLA now, while institutionalizing CLA has a far longer time horizon.

> "What we find each time is there are people—or what we call champions—in the right place at the right time in the right positions and in the right amount to create a tipping point for sustained organizational change."
> — The Importance of Champions: A Change Management Manifesto

Champions also foster sustainability beyond a contract like LEARN because they have seen—and can show—how CLA practices improve personal and organizational effectiveness.

LEARN outlined the observable, measurable behaviors that make a CLA Champion. In summarized form, LEARN defines champions as those who advocate for CLA; integrate CLA into their work; and model CLA for others. Potential champions are those who are curious about and open to CLA, but may be unsure of how to operationalize it in their work or may face constraints, such as time or overwork, that hinder their ability to engage in CLA practices. Finally, LEARN also recognized that there are those who actively or passively resist CLA for any number of reasons.
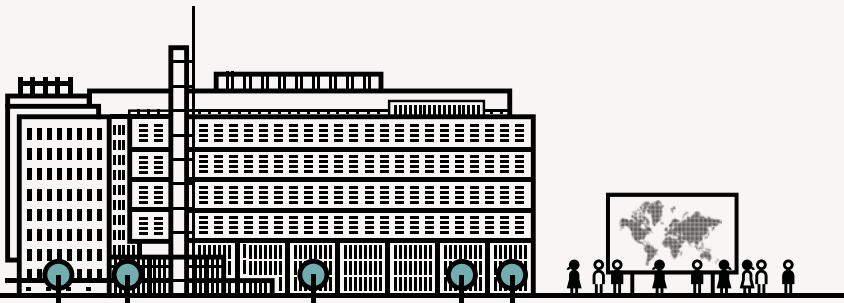
LEARN TIMELINE

What We Mean by "Champion"

LEARN defined and identified CLA champions as individuals who either advocate for CLA practices (promoters); integrate CLA practices into their work (integrators); and/or model, or "walk to the talk" on, CLA (modelers). They are also able to translate CLA into the "languages" that technical staff or leaders understand. For example, a champion can connect a leader's interest in evidence-based decision-making to more effective learning practices or find technical entry points such as political economy analysis in democracy and governance programming or market facilitation in economic growth. See LEARN's CLA Champion Spectrum that outlines the behaviors of CLA champions.

Potential CLA champions identified by LEARN, those who are curious about CLA but are unsure about how to apply it, are broken into two categories: inquirers (those who are open-minded but unsure and want to learn more) and enthusiasts (those who are committed and want to learn how to put it into practice).

Monitoring CLA champions was a team-wide effort. We created a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool to track individuals we identified as potential, existing, and new CLA champions to better tailor the type of support they may be seeking. For example, an inquirer might be curious to read our CLA Literature Review while an integrator might want to peruse the CLA Toolkit for new practical resources. We tracked champions' place of work, email address, details about how we engaged with them, and other important information such as our perception of their level of influence in changing the behavior of others and whether or not they hold leadership positions in their organizations.

Monitoring our champions was one of the ways we measured our success. For example, we tracked the percentage increase in the number of champions with high levels of influence and who hold leadership positions in their organizations over time. The reason we tracked these two indicators is because our monitoring data showed that when leadership is supportive of CLA and/or when there are individuals in positions of influence who advocate for or model CLA, it is more likely to stick. By the end of LEARN, we had 375 champions, of whom 37% were in leadership and 33% were observed by LEARN to be high social influencers.

As we engaged these new and potential champions, the first step was to help them make the connection between their existing work and how CLA can help. Our constant refrain was that CLA shouldn't be seen as additive. Instead, we asked: what are you struggling with and how can CLA help? For example, if you're not meeting your targets, what questions do you need to address to understand why and how can you change your approach in response to those answers? The key to opening conversations with new or potential champions was ensuring that CLA was in service of their existing priorities and providing the examples, resources, and communities to meet them where they were.

LEARN developed multiple, tailored channels to meet the needs of USAID staff and connect champions to each other to promote peer learning and foster sustainability. A final key component in the process of developing and sustaining champions was to encourage and recognize them in their work—appreciate the basic human needs for esteem, belonging, and achieving one's potential.

These elements of our multi-faceted approach to developing and sustaining champions is further described in the next four sections:

- Meet users where they are
- Provide champions with the information they need to make the case for CLA
- Intentionally connect CLA champions
- Celebrate and recognize champions

Meet Users Where They Are

To cultivate CLA champions, LEARN created opportunities for USAID staff to enhance their knowledge about and skills in CLA integration based on existing evidence of how adults learn (see the Modern Workplace Learning approach on the following page).

This spectrum of capacity building interventions helped develop CLA champions in diverse ways. In collaboration with the USAID CLA team, LEARN offered formal training for staff to learn the fundamentals of how to integrate CLA through a 5-day "Better Development Programming Through CLA" course and later through a shortened 2-day version; an overview of the CLA self-assessment and action planning process that used the CLA Maturity Tool; and an online CLA 101 course. The CLA Toolkit provides champions with resources, examples, and job aids for just-in-time needs.

Learning in the Modern Workplace

VALUE

1. Community of Practice
2. Working Groups
   • Scenario Planning
   • CLA in the PMP

Learning, individually, as part of daily experiences in the workplace, through self-improvement, and using the web (professional networking, keeping up to date, etc.)

Learning as a part of daily working with others in teams & groups through sharing of knowledge & experience

1. Learning Lab: blogs, newsletters, etc.
2. ProgramNet

1. CLA Trainings
2. Maturity Tool Training
3. Stocktaking Module

Learning through (e-)training

Learning from information, supporting productivity and job performance

1. CLA Toolkit
2. CLA Page on ProgramNet
3. Learning Lab
4. Resource Library
5. CLA Maturity Tool

AUTONOMY

COURSES   RESOURCES   SOCIAL COLLABORATION   PERSONAL LEARNING

Our technical assistance helped champions facilitate CLA-inspired processes. Regular communications provided opportunities for ongoing learning at the individual level, with USAID Learning Lab and ProgramNet blogs, podcasts, and e-newsletters. Lastly, we facilitated peer learning via the USAID CLA Community of Practice (CoP).

One Champion's Journey

Before joining USAID, one champion had heard about CLA from a coworker, agreed with the approach as a knowledge management practitioner, and sought to learn more via USAID Learning Lab. When she joined USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), she decided to take the 5-day CLA training in June 2017 based on the enthusiastic encouragement of another training participant who had been excited by CLA's relevance to OTI's business model and even developed a diagram to crosswalk the two approaches. The new OTI staff member was "inspired" by the CLA training as well and, as part of her action plan from the training, applied what she had learned to her efforts to engage staff and partners in reflection and documentation of processes for a program close-out.

Ultimately, OTI's close-out practices and materials were improved. By the end of the contract, a number of OTI staff have taken the CLA training. This CLA champion has also noted that PPL and LEARN were "incredibly supportive" in her work and she was one of the most active participants in the CLA Community of Practice. She and her colleagues have had a multiplier effect by promoting and modeling CLA within OTI and have even discussed sustaining Agency-wide efforts by possibly continuing the work on the CLA Literature Review previously facilitated under LEARN.

LEARN tailored interventions to be directly applicable to the needs of CLA champions and set them up for ongoing engagement and support around CLA. For instance, the 5-day CLA training used an approach to identify entry points to practice CLA, called "Pathways for Integration of CLA". Pathways started with a virtual pre-training kick-off session during which each participant identified a challenge or opportunity from their own work that they tackle throughout the training. Throughout the training, participants were introduced to tools, resources, and approaches that they could apply to their challenge or opportunity. Participants were also encouraged to create peer cohorts with their fellow trainees to support their learning beyond the formal training. By the final day of the training, participants prioritized CLA actions to help advance their challenge or opportunity and developed an action plan to take forward. One to two months after the training, we held virtual peer share sessions for participants to discuss progress on their planned CLA integration activities or to request support. To continue their learning and support, we added participants as members of the CLA CoP.

As a result of our efforts to strengthen CLA skills, 43% of our CLA champions have told us that our capacity strengthening initiatives—from our trainings to the CLA Community of Practice— have contributed to their ability to integrate CLA into their work. We also learned that individuals were experiencing huge leaps in their confidence levels in specific CLA practices as a result of attending our CLA training. One skill that we emphasized in our training was increasing an individual's ability to develop and implement an action plan for CLA. The reason for this was because we wanted champions to not only be able to "speak" the language of CLA, but also know when and how to apply it to address challenges that their teams face. When we followed up with individuals two months after they had taken the CLA training, roughly 32% of them responded. Of those that did, on average 75% of them had initiated or implemented their CLA action plan. This was significant because it meant that they not only understood CLA, but knew when and how to apply it in their work.

CLA Training Leads to Improved Mission Processes

In early 2018, one sub-Saharan mission decided to hold its first strategic portfolio review focused on the mission's progress towards its higher-level development objectives. The Deputy Director in the Program Office in charge of the portfolio review, knew that she needed to do something different with the process, both to make it strategy-focused and to improve people's negative perception of portfolio reviews in general. With that in mind, she chose to work on this outcome during the 5-day CLA training that LEARN and the CLA team facilitated in her mission.

Taking a CLA lens to this portfolio review led to some impactful changes. Despite the early skepticism from the Program Office Director, the trainee convened people from across the mission to get their input on the portfolio review questions (rather than having the Front Office dictate what they wanted to hear during the presentations). This also led to CLA being included as a presentation question itself, asking what people learned and how they adapted, which generated "captivating stories" from staff. Finally, the Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) who served as Development Objective (DO) Team Leaders led the process of preparing for their DO presentations and then gave those presentations (rather than having the American Office Directors front and center like usual). This was a great example of the CLA training leading to individual behavior change that ultimately impacted a mission process.

Provide CLA Champions With the Information They Need to Make the Case for CLA

As mentioned earlier, one of LEARN's three focus areas centered around building the case that CLA makes a difference to development. To explore how CLA can actually lead to improved development—both through improved organizational effectiveness and directly via better programs—LEARN and the USAID CLA team launched our Evidence Base for Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (EB4CLA) workstream to answer several key questions:

- Does a systematic, intentional and resourced approach to collaborating, learning and adapting contribute to improved organizational effectiveness and development outcomes?

- If so, how and under what conditions? How do we measure the contribution?

We addressed these questions through five EB4CLA activities: a regularly updated literature review, a Learning "Dojo" of USAID champions (described on page 32), a learning network of implementing partners, a CLA case analysis, and additional studies. Findings from these efforts provide preliminary support for links between CLA and improved organizational and development outcomes, and describe how collaborating, learning and adapting work together in development contexts. But it wasn't enough to confirm these things for ourselves—we shared the findings as broadly as we could, especially with our CLA champions, so that others had the information they needed to advocate for CLA integration.

LEARN's MERL team worked with our capacity building team to integrate EB4CLA evidence into the CLA training. We designed a special session where CLA champions reviewed the literature review findings and then role played with one another, using evidence to advocate for a CLA activity they wanted to try with a "skeptical" colleague. We also highlighted evidence throughout the CLA Toolkit on USAID Learning Lab and developed the CLA Evidence Dashboard, a special section of the website with an interactive, visual platform that presents a comprehensive body of evidence on the impact of CLA. We also shared our EB4CLA knowledge products out widely through our communications channels via Learning Lab email blasts and various external listservs (e.g., Adaptdev). Also, EB4CLA evidence was discussed at events such as Moving the Needle, the American Evaluation Association Conferences, and was featured in an article in the *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*. Within USAID, we conducted broad outreach via the CLA Community of Practice and different internal events.

EB4CLA reports, blogs, briefs, and podcasts were some of the most popular content on USAID Learning Lab. During the height of our EB4CLA promotion activities in 2017, EB4CLA blogs had about 11 times as many unique page views than the average blog on the site and EB4CLA resources (briefs and full reports) were downloaded about five times more than the average resource on Learning Lab.

> Just want to say thank you again for the Lit Review. My Nov 2017 version of the report is dog-eared and frequently quoted. Such a useful resource!"
> — USAID CLA Champion

> This is excellent and practical work, and delivered in a cascading series of products that go into increasing depth which I so appreciate—I can disseminate the various elements accordingly."
> — Implementing partner CLA champion

How Best to Persuade?

"The answer, it turns out, depends on who you want to do what. As part of our USAID Partners in Learning/Learning Dojo, we undertook a series of interviews with decision makers to determine what kinds of evidence they would find most persuasive in informing decisions about CLA and other systemic approaches. What we learned was surprising: our evidence-focused colleagues indicated that they were more likely to ask someone they knew about their experience with an approach, rather than to seek hard evidence of the sort we were compiling. Digging a bit deeper, we find that our collective (albeit anecdotal) experience and that of colleagues in other organizations seeking to establish investments and activities in KM, [organizational learning], adaptive management, etc., is that very different kinds of evidence are called for depending on whether it is meant to inform practice vs. resource allocations. When colleagues endeavor to establish a CLA process or incorporate CLA into programs or operations, they often ask a friend for experience-based guidance, or seek out case studies for direction on how (not whether) to proceed. When colleagues are asked to commit resources to CLA/KM/other systemic approaches, they ask for evidence of impact, and not infrequently cite the (perceived) lack of evidence as justification to refuse the investment. In other words, advancing a change agenda in an agency such as USAID requires qualitative examples for designers and practitioners who are trying to expand practice, but the ability to marshal resources for such expanded practice ultimately depends on being able to meet demand from skeptical quarters for clear evidence of impact."[9]

Simply put, if our champions have evidence, they are better armored against the skeptics—they may not change their minds but it makes it harder for them to act as roadblocks.

9   An excerpt from Young, Stacey. 2019. "How USAID is building the evidence base for knowledge management and organizational learning." *Knowledge Management for Development Journal* 14(2):60–82

Intentionally Connect CLA Champions

Connecting CLA champions to one another is critical to strengthening the sustainability of CLA practices and supporting cultural and organizational change. As noted, LEARN's theory of change focused on the critical role of champions, and each LEARN workstream focused on supporting the work of champions and convening them in a variety of ongoing engagements, some regular and others episodic. The goal was to build their skills and relationships with one another. We found that these connections have supported the translation of knowledge to action, enhanced collaborative action where appropriate, and promoted social and peer learning about what works in USAID's context.

The CLA CoP—a virtual community for USAID staff[10]—was a chief modality for connecting CLA champions within USAID and has regularly connected 546 staff across 76 missions and Washington operating units through regular online live learning events and an email listserv with member-initiated discussion threads and questions we seeded. We hosted a total of 20 live knowledge exchange events, facilitated a number of member discussions, and supported two working groups, one on CLA in the Performance Management Plan (PMP) and another on Scenario Planning.

CLA CoP champions have noted a variety of impacts resulting from the facilitated connections and regular engagements, with 95% of members that responded to our survey reporting that the community has helped them. For example, one champion noted that he learned about potential collaboration entry points for new designs within his Bureau and promoted after action reviews to learn from new processes and initiatives. Another champion shared a draft activity MEL plan with the CLA CoP after working on it following the 5-day CLA training. This MEL activity plan example was then shared by another champion with an additional implementing partner. And yet another champion used the CoP listserv to ask his colleagues for examples of "How I Work" documents—he quickly received 14 responses from USAID staff around the world.

Through intentional cultivation that was well-resourced, connections among members within the CoP have grown and deepened over time over time during the contract. Based on how active community members are, we have a reasonable belief that the community will continue to interact with each other with more independence. For example, during the fourth quarter of 2019, the listserv had 104 comments from members and only 34 comments from facilitators.

> " I see active participation from members on issues raised and I would say the CLA CoP is a go-to platform for seeking experiences, best practices, materials/tools and clarifications around CLA."
> — CLA CoP member

10 To join the CLA CoP, USAID staff can sign up on ProgramNet.

In 2016, LEARN and PPL initiated the Learning Dojo, an effort to bring together five operating units at USAID around a shared learning agenda. Representatives from PPL, the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, the U.S. Global Development Lab, localworks, and the Office of Forestry and Biodiversity met regularly to share learning around key learning questions such as: What do effective collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management look like? What does effective local ownership look like?

The Dojo was an excellent example of intra-agency collaboration around a shared learning agenda. Regular meetings allowed members to pause and reflect on what they were learning and apply new, cross-institutional insights in their work. The process of creating a shared learning agenda and sharing knowledge gained from each unit's learning activities strengthened relationships and the flow of information within USAID. In addition, it gave Dojo members, who are often on the front lines of providing CLA technical assistance in their bureaus, an opportunity to experience CLA firsthand.

Another key objective of connecting champions was to provide a variety of **peer learning opportunities** based on champions' shared interests and expertise. Often, the relationships were used for specific purposes or just-in-time support. In other cases, they served as a forum for innovation and learning. Appreciating the range of modern workplace learning (see figure on page 24) and needs of champions, LEARN "mixed it up" and provided engagements of varying frequency, structure and type. Ranging from the CoP, to the Learning Dojo (see left), to various learning networks, LEARN has facilitated and supported the development and maintenance of a diverse set of connections and relationships among champions.

Some of LEARN's efforts to connect champions were less successful. For example, we worked with the CLA team to establish a network of PPL contracts working to support Program Cycle implementation. The Program Cycle Network, as it was known, met a handful of times but lacked a mandate and USAID champion and, without buy-in, ultimately fizzled out.

Celebrate and Recognize Champions

LEARN identified opportunities to celebrate and recognize our champions in large and small ways. USAID missions, operating units, and implementing partners are already collaborating, learning, and adapting in a variety of ways to achieve better development results. Technical teams are trying to learn from their work every day and find better ways to design and implement programs. We found that moments of recognition and celebration motivate champions in their work and help them feel connected to the larger CLA community. This recognition also helped others to better understand what CLA looks like in practice, recognizing the moments when they are already collaborating, learning, and adapting, and think about applying those behaviors and ideas in other aspects of their work.

One of the biggest ways we recognized champions is through the annual CLA Case Competition. LEARN ran five case competitions, open to USAID and implementing partners, over the course of the contract, and through that initiative, we collected 444 cases highlighting examples of CLA integration in USAID's development work. We honored 40 case winners and 73 finalists, and developed a robust knowledge base of examples touching on every subcomponent of the CLA Framework, in each of USAID's technical areas, and in 61 missions across the world. LEARN and PPL have honored case competition winners at the annual Moving the Needle event, and the

work of winners and finalists has been highlighted on USAID Learning Lab and ProgramNet websites and e-newsletters, in USAID Agency Notices, in the PPL Brown Bag Series, and in presentations at Moving the Needle. We also have some anecdotal evidence that being recognized in the competition spurs greater CLA integration and empowers champions. A winner from a small mission in South America told us that being a finalist one year and a winner the next really helped her to advocate for CLA in the mission more broadly.

The CLA Community of Practice was also an avenue for recognizing and celebrating champions within USAID. We featured the work of the members in our meetings and discussions and found this to be an important way to highlight the champion experience and elevate it to a broader audience.

While moments of celebration provide us with a chance to encourage champions, it is also noteworthy when we have the chance to recognize the same champion for ongoing, sustained integration of CLA into their work. A great example of this is Emily Janoch, the Director of Knowledge Management and Learning at CARE USA. Over the years, Emily has submitted multiple winning cases to the CLA Case Competition, presented in a PPL brown bag, presented at Moving the Needle multiple times, and even appeared on an episode of the Leaders in Learning podcast, which LEARN produced. Recognizing the excellent work she is doing provides an opportunity to encourage her in her work, and also allows us to amplify the effects of her work by sharing her successes with others doing similar activities.

CHAMPIONS CHANGE WORK PROCESSES, CREATING LASTING IMPACT

As described above, throughout the first years of the contract, LEARN focused on developing and sharing the conceptual framework for CLA and developing a critical mass of initial champions who would understand how CLA may be applied to their challenges. We hypothesized that if these champions had the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they needed to integrate CLA into their work, their modeling and influence would ultimately create stronger teams who would have greater development impact. But have CLA champions integrated CLA into their work? If so, how? How do we know?

CHECK IT OUT!

Moving the Needle (MTN). Through the course of the contract, LEARN worked with the CLA team to organize four Moving the Needle events as a way to bring together DC-based CLA champions from USAID and the implementing partner community. Each event had a slightly different focus, but all were designed to be interactive and give champions an opportunity to hear about how CLA is linked to and supportive of Agency priorities and the broader development community, get ideas from others integrating CLA on the ground, explore the tools LEARN created, and provide feedback to USAID on CLA-related initiatives. Here's an example for MTN 2018. Moving the Needle gave LEARN a way to build community among champions and celebrate and highlight those champions doing exceptional jobs integrating CLA into their work.

REFLECTION QUESTION

In your change effort, have you identified your champions? How are you supporting, connecting, and recognizing their efforts?

We know that CLA champions have integrated CLA into their work because we have observed 847 instances of CLA integration across the missions and operated units we have worked with since the start of the contract. An instance of CLA integration could be anything from a mission or operating unit holding a stakeholder or mapping process to planning a mission-wide pause and reflect session. We monitored CLA integration through a tool we created called the CLA Integration Checklist (see left).

Our data show that the majority of instances of CLA integration (58%) occur at missions. We have observed CLA integration at 21 missions and 14 operating units. Of the 847 instances of CLA integration LEARN noted, 78% were not required by the ADS, meaning that CLA practices are being taken up because people see value in them, not because they are required. In addition, of the 847 instances of CLA integration, LEARN has had a medium to high contribution in 62% of the instances. This means that a little less than half of the instances of CLA integration are being kicked off and sustained by mission and operating unit staff themselves.

Focusing on Processes

LEARN has emphasized that CLA is not an additional workstream, but a set of practices that support Agency priorities, such as the Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR), private sector engagement, and the other components of the Program Cycle. The point is to use CLA approaches to improve how we carry out the work that must get done. Usually, USAID champions approached LEARN for support when they had a specific need tied to a concrete deliverable. For example, common entry points included learning agenda or CLA Plan development, research and report writing, strategic planning, activity design, co-creation or learning workshops and events, or drafting of specific products required in the Program Cycle.

It often became apparent, however, that the specific deliverable was only the tip of the iceberg. Champions who brought us in to support their operating units needed help seeing what was underneath the iceberg—how they could work within their contexts to create sustainable behavior change. LEARN's value-add became the intentional discovery process of determining what was really needed to make the client engagement meaningful and sustain CLA behaviors and practices. For example, if a client came with a need to complete a report, our value-add was figuring out with our clients how to ensure the report was used to inform decision-making.

The buy-ins in particular allowed LEARN access to the frontlines of USAID's work. As longer-term, well-resourced engagements, they featured consistent counterparts both on the USAID and the LEARN sides. In many cases the **process** that led to the **deliverable** was at least as impactful—if not more so—than the deliverable itself.

LEARN TIMELINE

Hold an after action review after an important intervention or effort to learn and improve for the next time. Review the lessons and recommendations documented before starting again—also known as a before action review.

CASE STUDY
Working With CLA Champions to Overhaul an Activity Design Process

In LEARN's largest buy-in with the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP), we supported an overhaul of the activity design process. This work started out with a specific request for the development and implementation of learning events and design workshops. As part of the process, LEARN and FFP started to work on the enabling conditions for success, which included a series of facilitated conversations with key stakeholders in preparation of the workshops to unearth expectations, deal proactively with conflicts, and help clarify key process points. We facilitated a multi-faceted after action review process to provide the client with recommendations that fed into an overhaul of their entire design calendar, creating multiple touchpoints to engage crucial stakeholders earlier and more frequently and make decisions step-by-step, thus avoiding last minute surprises and unexpected resistance.

In LEARN's second year of involvement in this process, a USAID colleague co-designed and co-facilitated the workshops in two out of three countries we supported, and led the after action reviews (with LEARN as participants). Because of our investment in creating strong partnerships of co-creation and co-accountability and a focus on process improvement, we were able to hand this work over to a strong team within FFP that had the necessary CLA capacity to not merely replicate existing structures but rather adapt them according to upcoming needs and continuous learning about what works best.

Following this 2-year effort, the head of FFP's Project Design Team had this to say: "LEARN served as an incredible partner and resource for the USAID Food for Peace Project Design Team. LEARN's technical assistance in the development and facilitation of an after event and design workshops were critical in improving the quality of the project design process and the FY20 FFP Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) solicitations. LEARN was essential in creating an environment, generating the data, and bringing different perspectives to improve the Design Team's stakeholder engagement, communication, systems thinking, and guidance on the content, structure, and parameters of our solicitations. These efforts have contributed to an improvement in: the efficiency of the design process, the team's internal and external relationships, and adoption of new approaches in program design."

TRY THIS!

If you're interested in being intentional in your hiring practices to recruit adaptive staff, see this useful how-to.

HELP! I'M HIRING NEW STAFF, AND I WANT THEM TO WORK ADAPTIVELY.

A tool to help you increase your chances of selecting staff skilled in adaptive management

CASE STUDY
Working With CLA Champions to Create a Learning Culture Within a Washington Bureau

Under a long-term buy-in with the Evaluation and Impact Assessment Office (EIA) in the U.S. Global Development Lab (Lab), LEARN worked with our USAID counterparts to scope an approach that would achieve desired results. The original request was for LEARN to conduct an assessment of the extent to which the Bureau makes evidence-informed decisions. Through a productive and collaborative discovery process, our USAID counterparts and LEARN realized that the assessment would not support the intended change, which was actually using more evidence. Our USAID counterparts shifted gears and designed and facilitated a CLA process that included synthesizing evidence and facilitating conversations among staff to internalize knowledge and make decisions on how to improve operations. The buy-in then refocused on putting USAID staff out in front with LEARN providing more "behind the scenes" support in facilitation training and coaching, product and tool development, and monitoring of CLA efforts. As outlined in the final outcome harvesting report[11], the Lab's efforts resulted in tangible outcomes, making the case that organizational learning contributes to organizational effectiveness. Our EIA colleagues reported that some examples of these outcomes include:

- "Teams at the Lab are hiring for adaptive mindsets, leveraging tools created by LEARN under the Evaluation, Research, and Learning (ERL) Plan. Use of intentional questions about adaptive mindsets in the workplace enabled hiring managers to better understand candidates' approach to operating in complexity and ambiguity, as well as better convey the operating context and expectations concerning working at the Lab."

- "Select Lab teams have made significant strides in implementing sustainability planning tools in strategy design and regular operations. Application of these tools has resulted in improved operational models, the ability to capture long-term outcomes, and enhanced adaptability of the teams to shifts in Agency priorities and operating contexts."

- "The Lab now has a more serious and proactive learning environment, which is being successfully disseminated more broadly at the Agency, as evidenced in USAID/Ethiopia's new learning agendas."

11 This report and the ERL Plan linked below are only available to those with access behind the USAID firewall.

To build toward sustainability, we co-designed activities and events with the client, and progressively moved from the role of doer of CLA to the role of coach and trainer-of-trainers, while our clients moved into roles such as co-facilitators, event designers, and ultimately influential champions. Examples of this development include the CLA training, which started out with trainers solely from LEARN, then also from the USAID CLA team and, finally, in the case of one mission, with FSNs as well. With other long-term buy-ins, we formally trained or oriented USAID staff to facilitate meetings, putting them in front of the room so that their colleagues were more effectively collaborating, learning from each other, and using that information to adapt as necessary.

Supporting Private Sector Engagement Through CLA

In the spring of 2018, the Bureau for Africa's Division of Economic Growth, Environment and Agriculture (EGEA) bought into LEARN to help the division use CLA to deliver on the Agency's shift to deploying more enterprise-driven approaches to development, engaging the private sector, and applying cross-sectoral solutions. A key priority for EGEA was to provide more effective support for the field in the above areas and they recognized that CLA skills and approaches would be critical to strong private sector engagement (PSE). At the same time, USAID released its PSE Policy, which required all missions and operating units to complete a PSE Plan by December 31, 2019.

In this context, LEARN, with our EGEA clients and USAID technical experts, co-created and launched an innovative cohort program to drive increased strategic engagement with the private sector by USAID missions in Africa.

The program was unique at USAID in that it spanned a year and combined high-touch capacity building in a technical area, in this case PSE, with an emphasis on leadership and CLA. Launched in March 2019, the Practical, InnoVative, On-the-job Training (PIVOT) program empowers small teams of change leaders in missions, including mostly FSN staff from across sectors, to use CLA to transform how their missions integrate PSE in service of better development outcomes. The inaugural cohort consisted of change teams from Ghana, Kenya and East Africa, Madagascar, Rwanda, Southern Africa, and Uganda—all of whom applied and committed resources to be part of the program.

The program supported PIVOT's champions to complete their required PSE Plans in a way that went well beyond a compliance exercise and instead focused on cross-mission collaboration, collaboration with the private sector, strong analytics for data-driven and evidence-based decision-making, and a more adaptive mindset that allows for greater flexibility and new modalities when working with the private sector.

According to findings from the PIVOT Learning Review (internal USAID link), as one mission participant said, "PIVOT is beyond PSE; it's about developing these CLA and leadership skills, too. It's about adaptive management and integrating that in the mission as well. For example, four of our Change Team members are on the CDCS team. A lot of these skills we take from PIVOT are being applied in the CDCS development team now." This viewpoint demonstrates how LEARN supported these mission staff to help them to carry their work more effectively by integrating CLA.

CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD IMPACT: SO WHAT?

It is the individuals who make up an organization who either maintain the status quo or create change. They either decide to work in certain ways, or don't. There is no mystical force at play. It comes down to the decisions they make and behaviors they exhibit day in, day out; and for a change management effort to succeed, behavior change needs to be at the center of that effort. LEARN intentionally targeted champions, identified the behaviors necessary for CLA integration, and focused on those behaviors in our interactions with and support for those champions to tip the scales toward CLA integration in missions and operating units at USAID.

Identifying, connecting, and supporting champions was a time- and resource-intensive process, and required an ongoing commitment from LEARN staff and our USAID counterparts across activities. Understanding, responding to, and connecting champions is an iterative process and cannot be done perfectly right away. We were able to use feedback and our MEL data to inform our process, including updating our theory of change to adapt our work and our understanding of that work. This type of iteration was only possible because we had gathered data and feedback to draw upon and we had the support of USAID to make changes.

Designing interventions so that they are directly applicable to a champion's work is critical. This requires knowledge of how champions are currently doing their work. LEARN's ability to design useful interventions stemmed from our team's experience working directly with CLA champions, learning about their pain points and successes, and trying new things until we found something that worked and was helpful.

A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. LEARN had success in building and sustaining champions across because of the diversity of our approaches and our willingness to try new things.

Lessons on Community Member Engagement

USAID staff balance heavy workloads that leave them feeling they have little time for activities that don't directly help them advance their work. For this reason, three approaches will help to keep members engaged:

- **Keep a finger on the pulse of member needs and interests so that activities provide clear value, and manage programming adaptively.** Ensure that programming is relevant to member needs. This includes topics, but also the approach to facilitating the CoP. Needs and interests may shift over time, so plan for regular ways to check in, such as periodic pause and reflect moments and participant polling at the start and close of learning activities for feedback; then adjust as needed.

- **Involve members in ways that incentivize them.** For those that respond to recognition or reputation, identify opportunities for them to share what they know with the community (or a larger audience) by authoring a blog or success story, or by asking them to share their subject matter expertise during a knowledge exchange event. Where sense of purpose is the biggest motivator, rally participants around a common mission. If mastery—the desire to get better at something that matters—is what most piques a member's interest, highlight the knowledge he or she will acquire through participation in CoP activities. (See Buchsbaum, 2017). Also, giving members a role in the delivery of an activity, such a note taker or segment facilitator, is engaging and can build skills.

- **Focus on trust-building.** Plan ways for members to get to know one another and establish trust. Examples include: using a video connection for remote gatherings when possible, starting with a good icebreaker, asking members to fill out a profile with their background, interests, and current work to circulate across the community, and taking advantage of opportunities to meet face-to-face.

Our experience demonstrates that the contract, in collaboration with our USAID counterparts, was able to support champions in integrating CLA into their work. In several cases, such as those highlighted throughout this chapter, this integration improved existing business processes, making them more collaborative and learning-oriented, and ultimately as a result, more effective. Because much of our work was at the Washington level or still in the nascent stages with missions, we cannot draw a direct line of attribution between LEARN's interventions and improved development outcomes, but we have established an entire body of work—the CLA Evidence Dashboard mentioned earlier—that demonstrates CLA's contribution to improved development results.

Based on our evidence, we also know that an institutional support mechanism can be successful in accelerating organizational change across the Agency. When we began in 2015, we knew of 32 missions that were integrating CLA in relatively small ways. We did not have many CLA champions to draw on or interview for an initial understanding of the scale and scope of CLA practice. By 2020, we had documented CLA Case Competition entries from 61 missions discussing their intentional and resourced approach to CLA, worked with all of the Agency's technical and regional bureaus on CLA integration, and amassed an over 500-person strong CLA CoP within the Agency. Our team reflected on what made this a successful change management effort and identified three key requirements that should be the cornerstone of future change management efforts at USAID (and all must be in place):

1. **Top-down requirement:** In 2016, USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning updated ADS 201 and made CLA a required part of the USAID Program Cycle. In addition, the spirit of the ADS heavily promoted evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management.

2. **Bottom-up creation of interest and action:** LEARN demonstrated the value of a CLA approach through our engagements with clients across the Agency. With the USAID CLA team, we also co-developed the tools, resources, and key messages about CLA that were shared with USAID staff and implementing partners. This work created interest in CLA among staff and enabled them to adopt CLA approaches.

3. **Support staff through the change process:** USAID responsibly invested in the change effort by sufficiently resourcing the LEARN mechanism. Our core work supported action from the bottom-up while other USAID operating units were able to buy-in to the mechanism using their offices' resources. This meant that staff across the Agency had access to technical

expertise in CLA (and relatedly process facilitation, organization development, Program Cycle processes, knowledge management, communications, etc.) that was used to both build their capacity in CLA and help them facilitate more effective processes.

The evidence we collected also demonstrated that integrating CLA approaches contributes positively to work life and ultimately results. By reflecting on our experiences and feedback from clients, we identified several factors that enable CLA to have an impact. We think these are important factors for others to consider as they embark on CLA-related journeys.

1. **Use CLA practices to support an organization or team's strategic choices and improve existing business processes:** Having a clear and common objective is critical for the success of any team or organization. We advocate pegging CLA to your objective to ensure that CLA is not done for the sake of CLA but for the achievement of a meaningful end result. (CLA approaches can also help you determine what that objective is.) Related to this, CLA is of most value when it is not an add-on to existing work but rather used to improve existing processes by making them more efficiently collaborative, learning-oriented, and adaptive in service of reaching your ultimate objective.

2. **Make your CLA practice systematic, intentional, and resourced:** CLA is most effective when there is a concerted effort to make it a systematic and intentional way of working and when it is sufficiently resourced. We have found that when staff see value in CLA practices, they want to replicate that experience. But that means the experience has to be a quality one, which requires resourcing it appropriately and being intentional about what you're trying to achieve and why. This doesn't mean you can't start small—you most certainly can. But be intentional about where you would want to start—why there? Be systematic in how you approach it (e.g., whenever we have a meeting, we're going to start with a five minute reflective exercise), and resource it (by allotting the five minutes or using a skilled facilitator on the team to make it a meaningful exercise).

3. **Ensure excellent facilitation of both processes and in-person discussions:** We consistently received feedback that clients and partners appreciated our excellent facilitation, which enabled productive collaboration, the exchange of useful knowledge, the generation of new learning, and ultimately decision-making and action planning that moved the work forward.

Like anything, CLA can be done badly, and when that happens, it's usually because of poor facilitation. The LEARN team began offering facilitation training to clients to build this skillset.

4. **Find champions in positions of influence:** It's important to go where the energy is, as described earlier. We did this by focusing on champions and we were particularly interested in those with high social influence. These are people who are trusted and well-respected by their colleagues. When they say something is worth doing, their colleagues listen, and they are often sought after for advice. Having these individuals promote and model CLA is critical to success.

5. **Have leadership create the space for CLA practices:** Whenever you have leadership support, a change initiative is infinitely easier. Leaders influence organizational norms and they can establish expectations that others feel compelled to follow. However, we have found that champions can still create significant change without having openly supportive leadership. What you don't want is leadership that is actively and openly working against CLA. At the very least, you want leaders to create the space that leaves open the possibility of using CLA practices where they are of most value.

6. **Be flexible:** USAID's ability to adapt, in particular, hinges on flexibility of existing processes and mechanisms. Higher flexibility enables greater CLA and better results. Our contract is an example of this; feedback from our clients consistently indicated that the flexibility of our mechanism enabled us to appropriately adapt. Without that flexibility, staff may be learning but unable to adapt their work to have the greatest impact.

> "LEARN did not just preach CLA, they actively practiced it."
> — LEARN buy-in client

CHECK IT OUT!

See this series of blog posts by LEARN's first Chief of Party covering how we took an intentional, systematic, and resourced approach to integrating CLA on our contract.

"*Walk the talk*" was an important mantra on LEARN. It meant that we integrated CLA practices into how we worked with clients and with each other as team members. It became a daily practice for LEARNers and an expectation that we should all live up to. "*Walk the talk*" appeared as the cornerstones of our core values—which also included openness, collaboration, creativity, agility, nurturing, and work hard, play hard—and was the name of the working group that we created to hold ourselves accountable to our CLA practice. "*Walk the talk*" is our internal version of a systematic, intentional, and resourced approach to CLA, and we present our tactics for achieving that in this chapter according to the components of the CLA Framework, beginning with Culture.

CULTURE: CREATING A CLA-CONDUCIVE (I.E., FULFILLING) WORK ENVIRONMENT

Our CLA-conducive culture did not happen by accident, luck, or the "stars aligning"; rather, it was intentionally cultivated. During the start-up of LEARN, staff discussed what it would look like to create a different kind of contract where team members practiced CLA as much as—if not more than—they promoted its application with clients.

We began with an initial brainstorm of foundational approaches to integrate CLA into our work. Reflection Fridays, discussed in this chapter, were borne out of this initial conversation and lasted until the end of the contract. As the initial months passed, we wanted to cement our practices (and values they represented). We facilitated an appreciative inquiry exercise to gather stories from team members, capturing when they felt most alive and engaged in their work on LEARN. We then identified values that enabled those stories. At the top of the list was the "Walk the Talk" meta-value that remains a hallmark of the LEARN experience.

We didn't just write down these values and hang them up on the wall. We ensured they remained present in how we behaved by:

- **Hiring for values:** We intentionally asked behavioral questions during interviews that elicited candidates' values to determine if they were in alignment with LEARN values. In addition, candidates received a handout on LEARN team values so they knew what they were potentially getting into.

- **Sharing values during onboarding:** New staff were oriented in more detail to the LEARN values during a discussion with the Chief of Party during their onboarding.

- **Including CLA in performance reviews:** We included "Embodying LEARN's values" as one of our formal performance expectations in order to recognize our internal CLA activities as a core part of our work. Supervisors therefore raised them in their performance discussions with their supervisees and encouraged them throughout the performance review cycle.

- **Creating a Walk the Talk working group:** This group was the central hub of maintaining our team values and bringing them to our work. Open to everyone on the team, the working group was a comfortable, welcoming space to talk about our values and raise concerns when they were not being maintained. The group met monthly, collaborating on ideas for how to address these concerns and more fully actualize the team values.

EVIDENCE SHOWS…

Based on the evidence from our EB4CLA work on culture, critical conditions to foster learning cultures include decentralized/non-hierarchical decision-making processes; availability of slack resources (including time); communities of practice; strong and enabling leadership; a risk-taking culture (experimentation); and knowledge management and sharing systems. Much of the literature shows that a culture of building trust and psychological safety improves staff's ability to learn and adapt, and that this stems from the organizational leader.

Exploring the Link Between CLA and Organizational Effectiveness

Think about a recent time at work when you felt most engaged, alive, and satisfied. What were you doing, who were you with, what happened, and how did you feel? Do you have the story playing in your head? Now consider: does your story have something to do with collaborating, learning, and adapting?

If yes, your personal experience aligns with findings from an analysis of more than 3,000 USAID employee responses to the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). As part of our EB4CLA research efforts, we explored the links between CLA and organizational effectiveness by examining CLA-related items in the FEVS. The data showed strong, positive relationships between CLA and indicators of organizational effectiveness including employee engagement, empowerment, satisfaction, and perceived organizational effectiveness. These findings fit within a growing body of evidence from both private- and public-sector research that recognizes employee engagement and empowerment as critical to successful organizational performance.

For example, psychologist Laura Delizonna noted in the _Harvard Business Review_ that "We become more open-minded, resilient, motivated, and persistent when we feel safe. Humor increases, as does solution-finding and divergent thinking—the cognitive process underlying creativity."[12] Our culture, manifesting in formal activities and informal practices, created the enabling environment for LEARN's success.

For more on the link between CLA and organizational effectiveness, see this brief.

12 Laura Delizonna, High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It. _Harvard Business Review_, August 24, 2017.

Like many other teams, LEARN experienced cultural growing pains during its hiring cycles. At one point after the hiring of a number of new staff, it emerged that they felt somewhat disconnected from the identity and vision of the team. LEARN leadership recognized that our culture was growing in concentric circles layering outwards from the team that started the contract. This led to unwanted distinctions between "generations" of staff members. Instead of adding new circles on the outside, the original circle needed to expand. We intentionally set about doing this through sessions revisiting our values at critical times based on the team's composition. We spoke frankly about where we weren't living up to them and did visioning exercises to internalize the team values. We were open to changing the values, although the team always decided to keep them the same. The staff that started up the contract spoke at length about the early days of LEARN to develop a shared history for the wider team. New approaches to cementing our culture were established by newer team members, such as Ales and Fails, book club, buy-in to buy-in coffee chats, and others described in this chapter.

Openness

TRY THIS!

Openness is ultimately about feeling comfortable on a team—can staff raise a concern? Can they share a new idea? A lot of what we think of as openness has to do with the concept of psychological safety in the workplace, a term coined by Amy Edmonson while studying teams at Google. LEARN used her tools to check in on the psychological safety within our team. We asked team members how strongly they agreed or disagreed with these statements:

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

For more on this, see this resource and consider where you and your team stand on these statements.

The LEARN leadership team modelled openness in our first year by being open to new ideas from the team. Team members came up with ideas for the CLA Maturity Tool and the CLA Case Competition and tried (and failed) to create a CLA simulation/experiential exercise. These early attempts were all pilots that LEARN leadership and the USAID CLA team encouraged, demonstrating their openness to having team members pitch new ideas that could actually get implemented.

LEARN's commitment to openness included being honest about failure. Our monthly Ales and Fails sessions allowed a staff member to speak frankly about a professional failure, at LEARN or at a previous job, and engage in thoughtful reflection on the lessons learned from that experience and the changes it precipitated. It is important to admit when we don't have the best outcomes so we can turn those moments into learning opportunities for ourselves and each other. Staff have noted

that these sessions were particularly powerful to understand how their actions and reactions contributed to a poor result, brainstorm ways they could have done things differently within the system, and reflect on how painful experiences helped them grow and work better today.

This openness was equally important between LEARN and all our USAID clients, but especially the CLA team. We were extremely fortunate to have transparent, collaborative, and excellent relationships with all three of our CORs. Not only did our CORs make time to meet with LEARN leadership on a weekly basis at the LEARN office, but stayed for an extra hour each week to have open office hours where anyone on LEARN could book time to meet and discuss ideas, issues, and concerns. It was a true partnership between LEARN and the CLA team in every sense of the word. You can read more about how USAID helped to create these enabling conditions in Annex B: What Has USAID Done to Enable LEARN's Success?

Relationships & Networks
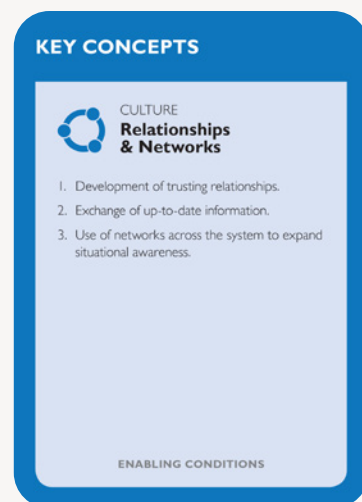
We knew that having stronger relationships and networks internally would go a long way towards creating the kind of environment we wanted as a team. It was about getting to know each other as people, not just coworkers.

If there was one activity that encapsulated this effort it would be the **daily team lunches**. It was not required, but the majority of our staff chose to participate, and sometimes we would even call in our remote colleagues by videoconference to join us. It may not seem profound, but the lunch table is where we got to know each other, laugh, and interact without getting siloed into the activities we worked on or our level of seniority.

We also fostered relationships right when a new team member joined. All new staff were paired with a longer-term staff member to be their **LEARN Buddy**—a special resource person for the new staff members to ask about LEARN's culture, history, and happenings outside of their team and specific responsibilities. We also hosted **informal digital communications channels**, at first on Google+ and later on a

The LEARN Team
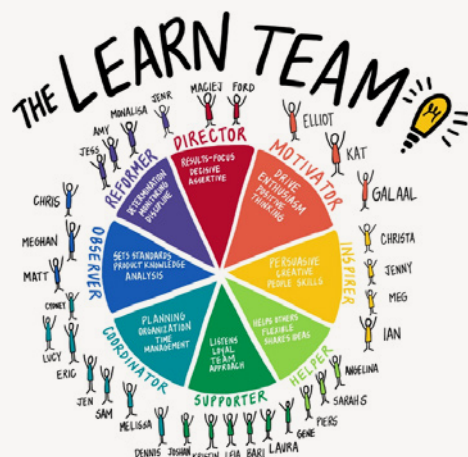
CHECK IT OUT!

LEARNer also supported each other during life's difficult moments by sending cards and gift certificates during times of grief. At times, we got more creative to ensure team members felt supported. Click on the video thumbnail below to see an example.
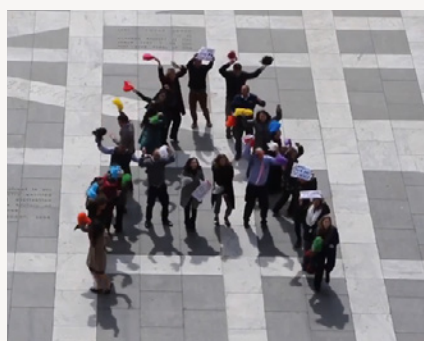
Microsoft Teams channel, where staff could chat, share photos and links, announce the presence of home-made baked goods in the kitchen, and engage in light, non-work communications. Using a dedicated platform kept our inboxes free for official business.

Staff members also took initiative to engage others with similar interests. We had a monthly "book" club to share articles, podcasts, and videos to engage our minds in relevant work topics like working collaboratively, having difficult conversations, or how to react to work disasters. There were also skincare and plant-care conversations, crocheting circles, and even origami tutorials.

To facilitate stronger relationships, we also expanded our **knowledge of our own workstyles** with activities based on the [Insights Discovery](#) tool and others, including our approaches to conflict. This allowed us to better know how we show up to work and how to better communicate with each other. We displayed these workstyles in the color wheel graphic shown on the left.

Staff were committed to recognizing, celebrating, and supporting each other outside of formal activities. We held monthly **birthday celebrations** with cards signed by the team and the person's favorite treat. Life milestones like engagements and baby showers were big events, with **personalized slideshow presentations and elaborate potlucks**. Even departing staff had genuinely warm, **celebratory parties** recognizing their achievements and wishing them luck in their future endeavors. We often celebrated team members' first TDY on LEARN with themed "welcome back" **decorations** covering their desk. We memorialized the moments that made us laugh with the Quote Board, which contains more than five years worth of funny quotes and jokes.

Another recurring feature of LEARN's informal practices was the emphasis on **showing appreciation** for one another. Our weekly staff meetings had space to shout out individuals' efforts at work. The **Kudos Board** hosted on the internal LEARN wiki was the space to share positive client feedback. **Appreciation activities** were regular occurrences in retreats where we would write messages to our colleagues on posterboard to be remembered.

LEARN also worked hard to ensure that our relationships with our USAID colleagues were strong. LEARN and the CLA team held monthly joint team meetings and CLA team members participated in a significant portion of each annual Big Picture Reflection retreat. We also found less formal ways to engage through happy hours, shared meals, and touristy excursions while on

TDY together, and fun farewell send-offs for departing team members. For one buy-in, LEARN team members even joined their USAID colleagues in a Whole30 challenge team-building exercise.

Continuous Learning & Improvement

KEY CONCEPTS

CULTURE
Continuous Learning & Improvement

1. Staff take time for learning and reflection.
2. Motivation for learning.
3. Use of iterative approaches that enable continuous improvement.

ENABLING CONDITIONS
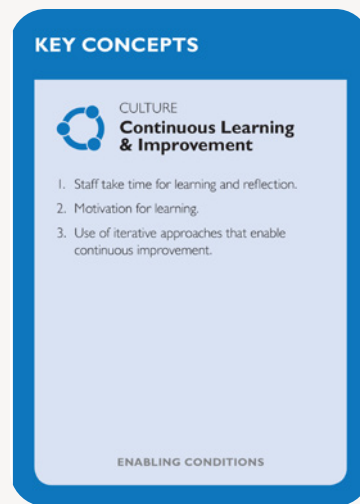
Specific practices for continuous learning and improvement at the team level will be described under Learning & Adapting. However, it is important to note that we promoted this practice at the individual level as well. For example, realizing that facilitation was a core skill of any team member, those who weren't already strong facilitators had the opportunity to attend facilitation training. To practice on-the-job, staff were invited to facilitate team meetings, after action reviews, or Reflection Friday sessions. Those who were interested in visual notetaking were encouraged to learn from a talented LEARNer who offered training and one-on-one coaching (which resulted in a second staff person becoming a go-to visual notetaker). Other staff members organized or led coaching sessions to build internal management capacity, and another trained us in diversity and inclusion, which fostered discussion about our team's make-up and hiring practices. Dexis enabled much of this continuous learning and improvement by providing all Dexis staff with up to $1,500 per year to put towards their professional development.

PROCESSES: HOW WE ROUTINIZE OUR CULTURE

An important part of institutionalizing CLA on LEARN involved creating processes and systems informed by the team's values. From the start of the contract, we attempted to set in place routines and habits that both reflected and reinforced CLA. One key lesson we learned was how important it is to be flexible. As the team and the work changed, so did our processes and systems. This adaptive evolution of our ways of working together was possible due to continuous evaluation of our practices and the openness to admit when things weren't working as they ought or that we needed new structures for collaboration.

Knowledge Management & Institutional Memory

KEY CONCEPTS

PROCESSES
Knowledge Management

1. Source various types of knowledge from stakeholders.
2. Distill knowledge.
3. Share knowledge with stakeholders.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

KEY CONCEPTS

PROCESSES
Institutional Memory

1. Access to institutional knowledge.
2. Staff transitions.
3. Contributions of Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) to institutional memory.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

From the start of the contract, we knew that developing effective knowledge management (KM) tools and practices would be essential to our success. For this reason, we set up both formal and informal knowledge-sharing practices in order to facilitate cross-fertilization and systematic archiving of documents across LEARN's core and buy-in activities using the Google Suite of tools such as a Google Site for our internal wiki and Google+ for informal sharing as noted earlier. We also dedicated an entire orientation session to LEARN's KM practices during the onboarding process for new staff. These KM practices included:

- **Tacit knowledge capture.** During start-up we were a team of 10 and were eager and excited to start implementing activities. We wanted to hit the ground running. But running where and with whom? USAID's CLA team had its own priorities and tasks outside of LEARN and was not able to run at the same pace. It took us a couple of months and a few difficult meetings to realize this was a pacing issue. To help alleviate this, LEARN worked to conduct a Tacit Knowledge Capture exercise with USAID knowledge holders to map the CLA system. We had the time, we had the resources, but what we didn't have was all the context or baseline knowledge of CLA across the Agency. This one activity became a launch pad for future work. It provided evidence and data to make programming decisions, while at the same time helped build our relationships across PPL and other parts of the Agency.

Tacit Knowledge Capture

For each topic listed in the below table, the team completed background reading and conducted focus groups and key informant interviews. Interviews and focus group questions were based on the reading, previous interactions, and the visioning workshop with PPL held in January 2015. LEARN synthesized and translated key learning into a final report shared with PPL to help make key programmatic decisions.

TOPIC	GOAL	RELEVANT BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
CLA History	Capture how CLA came to be in its current form	Learning Lab CLA Videos, Program Cycle PPL evaluation report
CLA Vision & Game Changers	Capture the vision for CLA moving forward and what game changers could impact achieving that vision	LEARN RFQ, KM Maturity Matrix, CLA Activity Rubric
CLA Institutionalization	Understand what USAID has learned to date from CLA institutionalization efforts	Program Cycle PPL evaluation report, mission examples of CLA/learning
CLA Practices, Resources, and Groups	Understand which CLA practices, resources, CoPs are most effective and which are least effective and why	Discovery report, Program Cycle Learning Guide (Learning Lab)
Working with Missions & Bureaus	Understand how best to engage missions, USAID offices, and implementing partners	CLA Mission Assessments, CLA Clinic outline for Indonesia

Some of our LEARN KM tools were highlighted for staff in a job aid using the helpful analogy of donut-making.

- **LEARN Wiki.** At the outset of LEARN, we created a Google Site that would serve as our internal wiki—a central repository for the LEARN contract's processes and procedures. We posted and kept up-to-date procedures and resources in areas such as travel reimbursements, procurement, templates for scoping and other documents, best practices for activity management, and kudos for LEARN. We also made sure to remind LEARNers to consult the wiki rather than reinvent the wheel or take up the time of our Project Management Unit's staff.

- **Knowledge Drop (internal blog).** As part of the LEARN wiki, we also created an internal blog called Knowledge Drop: LEARN Reflections & Outcomes Blog, which was designed to share information and reflections across the contract as it was happening in real time. Any staff person could write a post and knew it was a safe space for LEARN staff only. As of this writing, there have been 834 posts on topics such as interesting readings, new Agency guidelines, reflections from TDYs or training, summaries of events LEARNers have attended, and many more. Knowledge Drop did not immediately take off as a central hub for information and learning on the contract, however. Staff members had to make a concerted effort to post and encourage others to do the same, specifically leadership. Guidelines suggested that posts be kept short and informal, and several staff members made a concerted effort to model this approach. New staff members were encouraged to subscribe to the Knowledge Drop page on the wiki so that they would be informed every time something new was posted. Eventually, Knowledge Drop came to be a key way that LEARN sought to walk the CLA talk.

- **Intentional onboarding and offboarding.** Over time, we developed various templates and processes around onboarding new staff members and transitioning departing staff members. These included scheduling introductions for new staff members to each of our workstreams, as well as to LEARN and CLA. We developed slide decks and rotated responsibility for presenting at these sessions among experienced staff members. When staff members notified us that they would be leaving LEARN, we asked them to complete a handover memo so that relationships and tasks could be transferred over to another LEARNer. LEARN leadership also conducted frank exit interviews with each departing staff member to hear their perspectives and learn from them.

- **Regular meetings & informal knowledge sharing.** Below we will share more about our approach to internal collaboration and collaboration with USAID that contributed to effective knowledge management. In addition, many of the practices described in the Culture section, such as team lunches, Ales and Fails, and birthday celebrations, were supported through

shared documents and calendars. These informal events facilitated important knowledge sharing and reinforcement of LEARN's values.

While these practices represent a more concerted, team-wide KM effort, many LEARNers have shared how it is the simple things they will carry forward:

- Using shared naming conventions for files (not everyone adhered but most did), making searching for files in Google Drive much simpler.

- For a specific activity, having one running meeting minutes document (rather than individual files per meeting) that essentially created a log of key actions and decisions.

- For those who wanted a more systematic approach to maintaining institutional memory, creating process diaries for a larger process (such as a learning agenda or buy-in) that included information about key players, decisions and their rationales, pivots, and results.

- Maintaining scoping documents with change logs so someone new to the activity could understand how the scope had evolved. In one famous case, the change log was about three times as long as the original scope.

Many of these documents, like the running meeting minutes, scoping documents, and process diaries were shared with USAID to promote shared KM.

KEY CONCEPTS

PROCESSES
Decision-Making

1. Awareness of decision-making processes.
2. Autonomy to make decisions.
3. Appropriate stakeholder involvement in decision-making.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

Decision-Making

LEARN's approach to decision-making evolved over time. During our first year, there weren't clear processes for decision-making. Someone had an idea, got a green light from their supervisor, and moved forward. As we took on more buy-ins and the number of staff increased, it became clear that this extremely fluid set-up did not work for many. We needed more standards and clearer expectations for roles and decision-making.

At first, this translated into better scoping documents with more clearly defined roles and responsibilities, including for

decision-making. We added RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed) charts to our scoping documents to determine which stakeholders were participating in the activity and in which capacity. Importantly, stakeholders listed in the RACI charts included LEARN and USAID staff.

Over time, as the team more than tripled in size, internal decision-making was often funnelled through the management team made up of the managers of the various workstreams of LEARN (technical assistance, capacity building, communications, MERL, and platforms) and the leadership team (COP, DCOP, Senior Advisor for KM and Organizational Learning, and Senior Program Manager). This meant that there were now four levels at which internal decisions could be taken, depending on the scope of the issue:

- Activity managers were empowered to work with USAID counterparts to make decisions on the scope and implementation of their activities.

- Workstream managers supervised various activity managers under their workstream and provided an avenue for decision-making when an activity manager needed guidance. There were workstream-level meetings to share decisions from the management team or raise issues of concern that would be brought to that discussion.

- The management team met every Monday to address issues affecting the entire team (for example, how to do our performance evaluation processes, where we need more resources, what we should cover in the next staff meeting, etc.). Managers and the leadership team brought issues of concern to the group for discussion and decisions. Whenever there was a management retreat (about once a year), decisions were shared back with the entire team.

- The leadership team met every Wednesday and discussed higher level strategic issues. Any decisions taken at the leadership team level were shared at the management team, with opportunity for clarification or adjustments depending on managers' perspectives.

This approach took time to develop and was not always perfect—one particular area of struggle was TDY planning. Occasionally, when LEARNers were assigned to certain TDYs, others felt those decisions were opaque. Despite challenges, this structure contributed to making decisions as close as possible to where the work was happening (typically with activity managers) and provided mechanisms by which decisions could get made and shared quickly using established meeting structures.

EVIDENCE SHOWS...

In the development sector, a study of Nigerian civil servants found that the more complex a project, the more it benefits from staff having greater autonomy for decision-making. This echoes findings from the broader public management literature, which state that decentralized authority is associated with better performance. Higher levels of individual autonomy for decision-making are also associated with greater levels of organizational innovation and learning, particularly where contextual knowledge is critical.

TRY THIS!

Making critical decisions? Here are four key questions to ask yourself.

RESOURCES: MAKING OUR APPROACH A REALITY

EVIDENCE SHOWS...

Having the right staff with the right CLA skills is key to success. A 2016 study on DFID-funded adaptive programming in practice found that character traits and competencies (such as curiosity, facilitation, and teamwork) were directly related to the ability of teams to achieve their outcomes. Several studies in the corporate sector have focused on the benefits of resource investment in collaboration. A literature review of corporate strategic alliances and models of collaboration highlighted the significant gains that collaborating partners received from leveraging resource capabilities, social capital, and knowledge sharing.

KEY CONCEPTS

RESOURCES
CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

1. Mechanism type and scope enables CLA.
2. Budgeting.
3. Staff composition and skills.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

Without resources—particularly the type of contract we had with USAID and getting the right staff with the necessary skills—our attempts at walking the talk on CLA would have suffered.

During the design of the LEARN solicitation and contract, USAID created an **adaptable mechanism** that is objectives-based. Known as a statement of objectives, the contract laid out high-level results while providing flexibility as to how those results should be achieved. In addition, the contract identified very few set deliverables other than biannual reports, a final contract report, and trip reports. This has enabled flexibility to co-create with clients, in real-time, scopes and deliverables that are responsive to longer-term strategy as well as near-term opportunities and needs.

In addition, USAID adequately resourced the effort to achieve results. We also enjoyed significant budget flexibility, enabling adaptive management when necessary.

When it comes to staff resources, we developed a set of practices that helped us to identify the candidates who were the most likely to have an adaptive mindset and therefore the most likely to thrive at LEARN and contribute in important ways to our culture and our work products. Eventually, as part of a buy-in with the Lab in our fourth year, we created the short guide, featured earlier on page 37, laying out these practices for clients to help them recruit adaptive employees.

COLLABORATING

Internal Collaboration

To enable effective internal collaboration, we first carefully considered our use of meetings—the inescapable and often unexamined features of everyday office life. From regular weekly meetings to special offsite gatherings, we gave thought to how to make the best possible use of the time. While we didn't always get it right, we did try to apply several principles when deciding the content, format, and timing of various types of meetings. For example, we prepared **agendas** (either simple or, in the case of longer gatherings, more involved facilitation plans) in order to make the best use of team members' time, usually offering attendees a chance to have input in advance of the meeting. We also named **facilitators** (often other LEARNers), even for routine meetings and especially for more involved meetings such as retreats or workshops. Someone was always responsible for taking and posting **notes**. In addition to these formal practices, we also created **informal norms for behavior** in meetings based on our team values in order to encourage active listening, respectful phone use, on-time arrival, and the like. And because an increasing number of our team members worked remotely, either because they chose to telework on some days or had relocated permanently to a distant location, we developed a list of recommended practices to ensure the **full inclusion of remote team members** (see more on page 63).

Each meeting had a distinct purpose that fueled our internal collaboration:

Meeting Purpose #1: Ensuring team members have basic situational awareness of what is happening on LEARN, who is doing what, and changes in context.

- **Monday stand-up meetings.** We started each week with a half-hour meeting attended by the entire LEARN team standing around a long conference table, with remote team members on the phone or videoconference. The objective of the Monday stand-up meeting was to enable

EVIDENCE SHOWS...

The EB4CLA findings show that collaboration can be an enabler and a barrier to organizational success. Collaboration is an enabler in the following ways:

- Collaboration delivers best results when carried out strategically.
- Collaboration has benefits within and between organizations, such as increasing efficiency, knowledge pooling, and building trust.
- Collaboration is linked with an organization's ability to share knowledge and learn.
- Collaboration can improve team performance through a process of building collective capacity and social capital.

LEARN
WEEKLY STAND-UP MEETING

1 MINUTE

Word check-in
This is really one word with no context needed. Just let us know how you are doing.

Connection you made OR thing you learned last week
This should be limited to one and something that helps break down silos and promote cross-team learning.

Priority for this week
This should be limited to one and might elicit support or connections from across the team.

+Optional:
Help needed if beyond your one priority from above
Appreciation for others outside your work stream

staff members to share what they were working on and make connections across different workstreams. Each team member shared three things: (1) their one-word check-in which we recorded in a real-time word cloud; (2) a connection or learning from the previous week; and (3) a priority for the coming week. While the stand-up meeting lasted no longer than 30 minutes, an hour was blocked off for it on everyone's calendars in order to allow us to act immediately on the connections that we identified rather than running to our next meetings and forgetting about them.

LEARN TIMELINE

Checking on How the Team Is Doing Through Sentiment Analysis

Want to learn about trends in your team's emotional experience at work? Try sentiment analysis.

Monday stand-up meetings included **_what is your one word check-in_**? This could be anything: a feeling, allusion to the weather, or what you did this weekend.

We believe this structure can have some real impact on team morale, especially as people head off into the week. It sets the right tone and allows the surfacing of any real issues as well as reinforcing the psychological safety—for more on this, see here—of the team. It also signals the things we care about: each other, our work, and continuous improvement.

In looking at a subset of LEARN's data over the course of one year, our most common words revolved around being focused, excited, rested, grateful, and ready.

We were curious to learn more, so we conducted a simple sentiment analysis of our words of the week. Here's how we did it: First we used an algorithm to categorize each of the words as positive or negative in nature and placed them in one of seven categories of the most common emotions: joy, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, fear, anger, disgust. We found that 70% of the words used were positive, and one quarter of the words used were related to joy (26%) and anticipation (24%), followed by trust (20%) and surprise (14%). Less than five percent of the words used were related to fear, anger, and disgust.

Sharing out words of the week helped our team both express and hear the emotional experience of our teammates. In moments of joy, it signaled an opportunity for celebration and in moments of fear or anger, it signaled an opportunity for support.

Meeting Purpose #2: Discussing the latest and greatest in our technical approaches.

- **Buy-in-to-buy-in coffee chats.** At our fourth Big Picture Reflection in 2018, during an open space session, a group of buy-in activity managers chose to discuss the need to improve their basic information about the many buy-ins to LEARN. As an outgrowth of that session, this group proposed to set up a short, informal twice-monthly gathering on Friday mornings at which LEARN buy-in staff would share more about their buy-ins' goals, events, and products. Participants stated that they both enjoyed and learned from these coffee chats.

- **Demurkification Committee meetings.** We found ourselves fielding common questions from clients—particularly on "murky" topics covering the nexus of MEL and CLA and later CLA and J2SR. We decided to create a discussion forum to "demurkify" these topics and have a shared stance on how to respond to clients. The Demurkification Committee (fondly known as "Demurk" or the DMC) was open to all LEARNers but attended regularly by about half a dozen. We met monthly throughout 2018 and 2019, at which point the group decided it had served its purpose. The group suspended the monthly meetings but kept open the option of convening again if needed. As a result of these conversations, LEARN created the "Planning for Learning" session curriculum in the 5-day CLA training, developed a graphic on how CLA enables J2SR that was the basis of discussion at the 2019 Moving the Needle event, and developed a template for project MEL planning used by client missions.

Meeting Purpose #3: Reflecting on data and experience to inform future efforts.

- **Reflection Fridays.** On the last Friday of each month, we held two Reflection Friday meetings. The first meeting of the day, typically one hour, involved a range of activities and themes, from journaling to yoga to meditation. The second Reflection Friday meeting each month was a 90-minute pause and reflect session during which we dug into some of our team's learning questions and reviewed our progress by looking at MERL data.

- **Big Picture Reflections.** Each year, our MERL cycle (see page 68) culminated in a two to three day retreat. For the first four Big Picture Reflections (BPRs), we looked back at our accomplishments and challenges then took what we learned from that reflection to plan the next year's activities. For the final BPR, however, the goal was somewhat different; we focused on sharing our tacit knowledge with the CLA team members and our other USAID buy-in activity managers, identifying a vision for CLA at USAID going forward, and discussing how our

USAID colleagues could achieve that vision. All the BPRs were facilitated by outside facilitators, and PPL's CLA team members and other USAID activity managers attended for at least part of the time to allow for team building and joint work planning.

Meeting Purpose #4: Considering how LEARNers' efforts contribute to the bigger picture and how the individual pieces of LEARN connect to each other.

- **Focus Area meetings.** For management purposes, LEARN was organized by six workstreams—CLA technical assistance; capacity building; advocacy and engagement; monitoring, evaluation, research and learning; knowledge management and platforms; and management and operations. In the second year of the contract we noticed that team meetings were not enough to support cross-team learning and that staff were not internalizing the results framework, especially each of our roles in the three focus areas in the RF (three red buckets at the bottom of the results framework): building the case that CLA makes a difference to development; facilitating CLA practices and approaches; and building the skills necessary for USAID to sustain CLA practices beyond the end of the contract. We felt there were missed opportunities to connect dots and maximize our efforts towards champion behavior change.

  To help overcome these challenges, the LEARN leadership team explored and tested different models of monthly meetings to dive deeper into each one of the focus areas. For example, as a team we reflected and discussed questions such as:

  - What's one thing you learned in the monthly report and how you will apply it to your work?
  - How have you contributed to facilitating CLA processes and approaches?
  - How have you seen the work around CLA facilitation lead to changed behavior?
  - Is there a way that you can be more intentional about contributing to facilitating CLA processes and approaches?

  After about a year of focus area meetings we conducted an internal ethnographic review involving observations and 19 interviews to see if the meetings were still effective. We decided first to restructure the meetings and then to stop them altogether, noting that they had served their purpose and run their course. Instead, a much more effective format for promoting cross-fertilization specific to buy-ins came out of the Year 3 BPR—the buy-in-to-buy-in coffee chats.

In order for remote working to be successful, we need to ensure that it fosters effective collaboration; but that is a lot easier said than done. Try some these remote working tips for international development staff to improve the efficiency and productivity of your important working relationships:

- Clearly communicate your availability
- Use calls, chats, and video instead of relying solely on email
- Find an in-person ally who can prompt and promote your engagement during meetings
- Use a digital flipchart
- Troubleshoot technology ahead of time

The tip sheet lists many more ideas and identifies the applicability of each tip by remote working profile.

Certain meetings did a little bit of all the above depending on what was needed at that moment:

- **Weekly LEARN team meetings.** These 90-minute gatherings offered us the opportunity to share information across the entire team and offer short "show and tell" sessions about new tools or products. USAID CLA team members attended one of these team meetings each month, which enabled us to share knowledge across our larger collaborative team. For a time, we also invited USAID buy-in managers to attend one of our monthly LEARN team meetings, but low attendance caused us to return to CLA team members only.

- **Activity management and workstream meetings.** There were regular meetings of workstreams, the management team, the leadership team, and most activity teams. These meetings ranged from short daily walking meetings to weekly standard meetings to ad hoc meetings to deal with specific issues in a timely manner. Some of these meetings were collaborative working sessions on particular products, while others involved short skills lessons or standard management decision-making processes. In each case, the length, format, and content of the meetings were designed to maximize efficiency, collaboration, and learning.

Through all of our internal collaboration efforts, LEARN was intentional about integrating remote workers (those based outside of Washington, D.C.) and those who were semi- or fully-embedded within USAID at the Ronald Reagan Building (most LEARN staff sat in separate offices on Pennsylvania Avenue).

- **Integrating remote workers.** LEARN had staff members working remotely almost from the start of the contract, and they increased in number in our final two years. As a team, we needed to find ways to keep these staff members involved and informed, which was often a logistical challenge. Through trial and error, we sought out technology, such as a new wide-area speaker phone, and established conventions that helped us to feel well connected to our remote team members. Two of our remote staff, along with a remote team member from the USAID CLA team, summarized what we had learned as a team in a set of tips identifying the responsibilities of both the remote staff and those in the home office.

- **Supporting embedded staff.** One challenge we faced was around how to make LEARNers who were 100% billable to one client or embedded directly with USAID feel like full members of the LEARN team. To help with this, they were expected to participate in select LEARN activities (such as Monday stand-up meetings and Reflection Fridays), which allowed them to

be connected to what their colleagues were doing. This led to better understanding and collaboration such as a more streamlined communication messaging across USAID Learning Lab (a public website) and ProgramNet (internal to USAID) platforms. They also shared back valuable insights into the details of how CLA was being integrated across USAID, for example, on how to translate CLA into a nuanced language or culture of a bureau or team such as FFP.

We occasionally encountered some resistance from some buy-in client counterparts who didn't see the need for staff focused exclusively on certain buy-ins to participate in these LEARN meetings. However, many of those clients eventually saw the benefits of how their embedded staff were able to produce better results due to their greater awareness of and connection to CLA efforts underway elsewhere in the Agency.
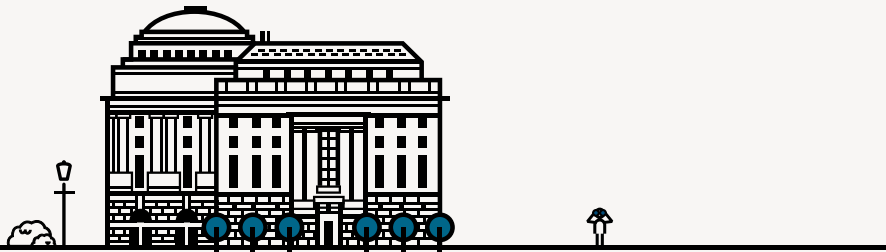
Benefits to Creating a One Team Model

Reflecting on LEARN's relationship and management structure, staff noted that because of the tighter feedback loops and close collaboration they were able to work better with the team's support. For example:

- "I took advantage of all the LEARN facilitators who reviewed and commented on a capacity building resource that I needed help with from more experienced facilitators."
- "We were able to take advantage of the deep bench on LEARN because we knew their strengths."
- "We engaged in reflection activities that helped us take a step back from our work, better understand the context, and discuss scenarios with others (e.g., writing reports and setting deadlines/client expectations, Ales and Fails as an area for personal growth as an activity manager and facilitator)."

To make sure everyone involved in an activity is on the same page from the outset, use a template that captures the full scope before you start. Here you can agree on objectives, anticipated milestones, measures of success, roles and responsibilities, etc. Make sure to include a pivot log to document changes that arise over the course of implementation.

External Collaboration

KEY CONCEPTS

COLLABORATING
External Collaboration

1. Identify and prioritize key stakeholders for strategic collaboration.
2. Decide how to engage key stakeholders.
3. Collaborate with key stakeholders based on decisions reached.

CLA IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

LEARN's success or failure to deliver effective change was strongly influenced by our ability to develop strong partnerships with clients and other stakeholders. Over the life of the contract, we learned that to create strong partnerships, we had to understand and make effective use of our role as an institutional contractor, establish co-accountability with USAID, and effectively manage inherent and implicit power dynamics.

Creating co-accountability. The role of an institutional support contract can be ambiguous. It's not staffing, but it's also not direct implementation; it's somewhere in between. The goal is to support USAID in carrying out its work. Ultimately, USAID needs to own and in most cases continue the work. LEARN was most successful when we and our clients were equally accountable to USAID for the success or failure of our work. For many clients, this was a new way of working. It was often uncomfortable and took time to build trust, set boundaries, and understand each other's roles. After many iterations based on trial and error, LEARN created a scoping document and process to clearly identify the change desired by the client, their role in this change process, and who needed to be involved along the way. When this co-accountability model worked (which wasn't 100% of the time), we also saw an increase in capacity by the client to implement CLA into their work outside of LEARN. This also led to an increase in sustainability of our activities. For example, by the end of contract, the CLA team facilitated the 5-day CLA training course independent of LEARN technical staff. Similarly, after a focus on building internal facilitation skills the Lab was able to implement new learning processes independent of LEARN (for more on this see page 37).

Taking time to build trust. Trust is not immediate. It takes time to earn and sustain. LEARN was very intentional in building trust with our clients to create partnerships that worked. As mentioned earlier, it is important to emphasize that this partnership between USAID and LEARN was not a traditional model of Chief of Party-to-Contracting Officer's Representative with all

communication channeled through this one relationship, but diffused trust and relationships across LEARN and USAID staff. LEARN managed its activities through a one-to-one USAID-to-LEARN activity manager structure across all of our core CLA team support and buy-ins. When possible, we avoided shifting activity managers to support continuous and longer term relationships.

To enable these relationships and enact this diffused management model, we focused on hiring staff with the competencies to manage adaptively and learned that we needed to invest in building staff skills. One of the skills that we learned was key, not only to our technical work but also our client management, was facilitation. Having staff who are able to manage effective meetings and processes has been key to building trust in our technical and management competencies as a contract. To do this, most LEARN staff (operations and technical) with limited facilitation experience attended facilitation training. Additionally, LEARN created an internal Activity Manager's Bootcamp that included a series of sessions on client relationship management, budget and contracting, and scoping and negotiation skills. More specifically, as part of the scoping process, the team would lead conversations to better understand preferences in communications, work style, and personality.

Understanding power dynamics. Another key consideration as a USAID contractor whose role is to enable change is to be cognizant of the inherent power dynamic within the relationship. Even in the best partnership where co-accountability and trust are created, there will always be a client-to-contractor element, where ultimately the client has the decision-making authority. Recognizing these power dynamics and working within them is key to enacting change. At times, these dynamics created real challenges. In a few cases it led to our inability to program activities and set reasonable expectations, or at worst fostered unhealthy working relationships. But for the most part, LEARN was able to forge very successful and productive relationships with USAID that enabled each of us to play to our strengths.

The [EB4CLA evidence](#) suggests that there are myriad benefits to organizational learning, including adapting to changing conditions and improving organizational performance. For example, in the development sector, a June 2016 [World Bank study](#) found that good quality M&E is positively and significantly associated with project outcomes. The report identified factors that improve M&E quality including ensuring that M&E is used for learning that informs decisions and enables adapting when necessary and that M&E is incorporated into program management and not viewed as a separate activity.

LEARNING & ADAPTING

KEY CONCEPTS

💡 LEARNING
M&E for Learning

1. Relevance of monitoring data to decision-making.
2. Design and conduct evaluations to inform ongoing and future programming.
3. Align monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts across the strategy, project, and activity levels.

CLA IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

As part of walking the talk on CLA practices, Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning and Continuous Learning and Improvement (subcomponents of the CLA Framework) were important to our processes and systems as a team to measure our impact and ensure we were on the right path. To do this we put in place a set of systematic practices that enabled us to track our progress and adapt our activities if necessary. These practices included:

- **Developing a Theory of Change for LEARN:** An important part of walking the talk was following the advice we often gave to USAID missions to develop a Theory of Change describing how the outcomes we sought might be achieved. Once we developed the Results Framework shown on [page 13](#), we were better able to track our progress toward achieving our goal.

- **The MERL cycle:** An enabler of our adaptive management practice was our MERL cycle, shown on the left. LEARN's MERL team developed a set of regular practices around data gathering, analyzing, and reflecting at key inflection points throughout the year. In addition to the monthly Reflection Friday sessions, there were also quarterly sessions with each workstream to review monitoring and impact data. Work plans were developed jointly with the USAID CLA team every six months, and the fiscal year culminated in the Big Picture Reflection, as noted earlier. We had several learnings related to our MERL cycle, but there is one thing we want to highlight here: **the importance of internalization**. In Year 2 of the contract we realized that in order for our team to use data to inform our decisions about our work, we needed to first internalize the data. Internalizing data involved interacting with the information, questioning it, and digesting it. According to a review of the literature, research suggests that people need to grapple with information in order to really take it in and use it. We created several [internalization exercises](#) to help our team and others digest and utilize our data.

- **After Action Reviews (AARs):** Following every event LEARN facilitated, we conducted an AAR. We also conducted AARs upon reaching important milestones or after completing a product. While the structure, format, and participants of the AARs varied, most adhered to the three standard AAR sections: What did we set out to do? What did we actually do? And what went well, not so well, and what could be changed in the future (plus, minus, delta)? Then, crucially, before we embarked on a similar activity again we made a point of reviewing the AAR notes from the previous iteration. In some cases, we also held Before Action Reviews, or BARs, in advance of launching new activities to pick the brains of others who may have completed similar work in the past.

- **Reflection Fridays and Big Picture Reflection:** Our monthly and annual reflections highlighted above incorporated data from our MERL processes, enabling us to make evidence-informed decisions on where to stay the course or adapt.

These learning processes, conducted both internally and with our USAID colleagues and clients, resulted in hundreds of adaptations large and small over the five and a half years of LEARN. Many of these are mentioned throughout this report, but here is a "top ten" list of the most significant or impactful adaptations we made (in no particular order):

1. **Results Framework:** As mentioned several times throughout this report, we updated the LEARN RF to put champions front and center in a more intentional focus on change management.

2. **CLA Framework and Maturity Tool:** The origin of this critical model was an enormous spreadsheet, known then as "the matrix," that LEARN and the USAID CLA team adapted over time and through seven versions to its current format of the circular Framework and card deck Maturity Tool. The various versions were piloted and updated based on feedback from those we used the tool with and our own insights. The winding course of development was captured in a CLA Case Competition entry in 2016 although we have continued to adapt the tool since then, including developing new facilitator resources and translating the tool into Arabic, Spanish, and French.

3. **CLA Training:** The CLA training was probably the thing we most iterated over the course of LEARN; at least some part of the content was updated after nearly every single delivery. In

addition to almost non-stop content updates, we made many adaptations to how the course was facilitated, including changing the number of facilitators, changing the mix of LEARN and USAID facilitators (shifting more and more towards USAID for sustainability purposes), training and incorporating FSN facilitators for mission deliveries, experimenting with different pre- and post-training engagement modalities, and adapting the length of the course.

4. **Focus on J2SR:** In order to support USAID's new strategic direction on J2SR in 2018, LEARN and the CLA team were very intentional about documenting and sharing practical ways that CLA could help missions and operating units implement the initiative. Under the CLA team's leadership, Moving the Needle 2018 strategically placed CLA as a way to operationalize self-reliance. In addition, we adapted both the CLA training and the Case Competition to incorporate self-reliance messaging. It also resulted in a new buy-in activity to support the Agency's Self-Reliance Learning Agenda.

5. **Process Facilitation:** As described in chapter 1, another important adaptation was the move away from a sole focus on deliverables to a joint focus that also prioritized process facilitation. LEARN's value-add became the intentional discovery process of determining what was really needed to make the client engagement meaningful and sustain CLA behaviors and practices.

6. **PIVOT:** The PIVOT program (described on page 39) was developed in Year 5 of LEARN and represented an important adaptation to how we and USAID had previously conducted capacity building efforts. Throughout the course of PIVOT's pilot year, the team supporting PIVOT continued to learn and adapt as they worked with USAID and the cohort members to find the most effective ways to empower participating change teams to use CLA to transform how their missions integrate PSE.

7. **Platform Improvements:** Over the course of the contract, LEARN continued to adapt and update the platforms we supported—including USAID Learning Lab, ProgramNet, and the Program Cycle Dashboard—to improve the user experience and respond to user feedback and needs. For example, popular new features on Learning Lab included an Evidence Dashboard and an interactive Case Map of the CLA Case Competition entries. We also worked to adapt content management processes to promote stronger alignment across the platforms.

8. **Staffing:** Throughout this chapter, we described several important adaptations related to staffing, including LEARN's hiring and onboarding processes. The tremendous growth of the team size over the life of the contract resulted in many adaptations already mentioned, such as the buy-in-to-buy-in coffee chats, to promote inclusion and connection.

9. **Expanding the "Ownership" of CLA:** Although LEARN was originally designed with buy-ins in mind, it took a while to really hit our stride where buy-ins were concerned. Even when we did, beginning in Year 3, LEARN's core CLA work and buy-in work remained largely siloed from each other. It wasn't until Year 4 that we truly recognized the importance of not only connecting the dots for ourselves, but ensuring that our USAID clients were connecting their own dots among each other as well. LEARN and the CLA team also recognized that diffusing ownership of CLA throughout the Agency would speed and cement its institutionalization. As a result, we expanded efforts to highlight CLA leadership from outside PPL during our Moving the Needle events and continued to look for ways to connect our various USAID buy-in activity managers.

10. **Period of Performance:** Although it may seem strange, the period of performance was something that required a great deal of flexibility from LEARN. The contract was extended not once, but twice (the second time very unexpectedly) and the funding levels for these extensions were extremely unclear. This resulted in staffing changes and shifts in activity priorities and LEARNers, and the leadership team in particular, had to adapt significantly to these changes.

WALKING THE TALK: SO WHAT?

On LEARN, we have occasionally received the following question, "What's the return on investment—or ROI—of CLA?" In other words, "why should I invest in CLA?" It's a fair question; anyone considering a new behavior or approach should consider the advantages and disadvantages of doing so. We often turn the question on its head with a different way of thinking about ROI, asking instead, "What's the Risk of Ignoring CLA?" CLA may take an investment of time and resources, but if you ignore CLA, the costs can be much higher. We learned that it is an intentional practice that starts with hiring the right staff and follows all the way through to offboarding and

transition planning at the close-out of a contract. No matter your role—COR/AOR, Chief of Party, M&E advisor, learning specialist, or project manager—there is a place to start walking the talk of your own CLA practice.

Throughout this chapter, and the entire report, we have shared a lot of "Try This!" tips that we used on LEARN. Our intention is for readers to feel inspired to experiment, try out some of the practices that worked for us—ingredients in our special sauce—and adapt them to your own context. We leave you with this challenge: be the champion who models, inspires, and motivates others.

Here are a few takeaways to support you in this challenge:

- **Creating partnership is key:** To be a broker of change, you need to take a systems approach and understand where you are in that system and the power dynamics surrounding you. Building trust is critical to creating relationships of co-accountability to support sustained change. The COR/AOR and implementing partner relationship sets the tone and overall success of the contract.

- **Building a team culture needs to be intentional:** Fostering a CLA-friendly culture is a practice like any exercise—requiring ongoing intentionality, structure, and commitment. It should be a part of everyone's job. Look for small and large ways to keep values alive through individual and group practices.

- **Processes and systems reinforce culture:** Everything, from meetings to hiring and staff performance, is an opportunity to reflect a team's culture and values. Consider what values you're promoting, knowingly or not, in your processes.

- **Have fun!** Just because you are at work doesn't mean you can't have fun. Evidence[13] shows us that psychological safety and trust builds individual and team resilience, creating an environment of creativity, humor, and play.

TRY THIS!

Set the tone for a collaborative relationship between USAID and implementing partners.

REFLECTION QUESTION

How can you walk the talk on CLA in your work?

13 Laura Delizonna, High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here's How to Create It. *Harvard Business Review*, August 24, 2017.

CONCLUSION: NOW WHAT?

As of October 2019, we have reached 82 missions and 14 of the 15 geographic, functional, and central bureaus through our work: 47 missions and 8 bureaus have requested short-term in-person or virtual CLA support; 53 missions and 13 bureaus invested in at least one of their staff members attending the 5-day "Better Development through CLA" training; 61 missions and 8 bureaus submitted entries to the CLA Case Competition documenting their CLA approach and how it contributed to better results; and staff from 59 missions and 13 bureaus have been represented in the vibrant CLA Community of Practice.

When we asked our champions what they observed as the most significant change as a result of integrating CLA into their organizations, they said:

- "We have embedded CLA thinking in our core project management guidance document."
- "Starting to introduce pause and reflect moments into project timelines for learning."
- "Regularly referring to the CLA evidence base, framework and toolkit when doing similar work with DFID."
- "Team members taking pride in their adaptive management focus, helping them to prioritize management as much as their technical interventions."
- "Understanding and tools to apply learning to decision-making."

The reach LEARN had over the last five and half years is more than we ever anticipated at the beginning of the contract. It demonstrates the continued demand for CLA and change management facilitation. But, now what? How are we as a community going to take this forward and continue to accelerate organizational effectiveness and eventually development results?

It is going to take you, the reader (and champion) to carry this learning forward and apply it to your work. No matter your role, you have something important to contribute. Based on our evidence[14] and our own data, we now know that an institutional support mechanism *can be* a successful accelerator of organizational change across a federal agency. Throughout this document, we have shared our experiences and recommended tips for applying CLA practices to your own work, encouraging you to walk the CLA talk; we have shared our learning on taking a behavior change approach to place people (the doers) up front; and we have synthesized our monitoring and evaluation data to demonstrate both the value and under what conditions organization change can take place. We hope this all helps you in your CLA journey!

14 USAID LEARN, Evidence Base for CLA Dashboard: https://usaidlearninglab.org/eb4cla-questions

EPILOGUE

Those of us who get really, really lucky find ourselves engaged in work that is both impactful and joyful. USAID's CLA effort has been both, for me and for many others, and the LEARN contract has been a big part of why that's the case.

Although we had accomplished much in the five years of CLA prior to the launch of the LEARN contract—positioning CLA within USAID's policy bureau and advocating for it broadly, establishing a team, honing its mission focus, building capacity around key CLA practices, and embedding it in informal guidance (formal policy requirements would come a bit later)—the real shift toward refining CLA and scaling it in USAID programs came only once LEARN was in place.

Investing in change efforts—and resourcing them well—is essential to their success. And while that certainly means funding and staff, it means so much more. LEARN demonstrated exactly what that "more" consists of: a team consistently, full-heartedly investing in itself as a team and its members as their whole selves. This report makes evident both what that entails, and what it enables. Hopefully, it also conveys the joy in it.

For many of us, "work" means routinely compartmentalizing ourselves, bringing only the intellect and engaging with others only on that level, weeding out emotions and other human elements that can make the workplace tricky but that also make us who we are, and that inform why and how we work, and why and how we relate to each other. The tremendous power that comes from having head, heart and hand fully engaged is something we routinely blunt, even undermine, as we seek legitimacy within accepted definitions of professionalism.

What CLA acknowledges, particularly in its inclusion of enabling conditions in the CLA Framework, and what LEARN has taken as its foundation, is that we are most powerful when most whole, and wholly engaged, in the work we do and the relationships we forge. In this mode, we leave nothing on the table.

Long before I became an international development professional, I was a participant in, and a student of, social movements. It's this activist orientation—in which head, heart and hand work in concert for positive change—that informs why and how I've led CLA at USAID. CLA is a change effort, first and foremost, and one that serves the interest of doing better development: more effective, more inclusive, more durable change for the world's less powerful. In focusing on

developing CLA champions, LEARN embraced an aim of—and developed a model for—activating agents of change in support of better development. The model they developed for doing this, co-created with USAID and described in this report, is a model for engaging would-be champions' whole selves, building from (not screening out) the passion people bring to their work in development as well as their deep knowledge and expertise, and helping people connect their hearts and hands, as well as their heads, in pursuing positive change.

In doing so, they demonstrated what a partnership can be and do, by walking the talk, by making space for people to grow and bring new skills, insights and knowledge to our work together, and by making space for the team to take risks, innovate, iterate—and support each other as well at the levels of intellect, emotion and will. By bringing this to our partnership, LEARN took us places with CLA that we never would have known to go. And this focus specifically on developing CLA champions enabled us to hone in on how CLA connects to people's sense of purpose, to engage their strong sense of commitment, and build their capacity to use CLA to make their development work stronger. If LEARN was PPL's force multiplier, then the champions LEARN cultivated are force multipliers at a greater level—leaders of CLA both inside USAID and outside among our IPs.

And this is why we know that CLA's future at USAID is bright: those of us who have been involved with CLA through LEARN's infectious spirit and deep expertise are all change agents, and we will take this experience to whatever we do. In that way, LEARN's legacy will not only be CLA's future—it will also live on in the other work that those touched by LEARN go on to do, whatever and wherever that may be. And for that, we can all be grateful, and joyful.

Stacey Young

Dr. Stacey Young
USAID's Senior Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning Officer

LEARN TIMELINE

Phase 1
OCTOBER 2014 – SEPTEMBER 2015

Events, Trainings, and TDYs

Significant Achievements and Outputs

LEARN
END OF
CONTRACT
REPORT

OUTPUTS

OCT
LEARN awarded

DEC
First LEARN
work plan written

"We, as an Agency, see ourselves as facilitators, not creators, of development."

FEB
CLA Community
of Practice
launches on
ProgramNet

First LEARN TDY
to USAID/Central
Asia Regional
Mission

"Through a tacit knowledge session with the CLA team, we learned that there was anecdotal evidence that at least 31 USAID missions were doing some form of CLA. At that time, our theory of change was that if USAID modified its guidance to make CLA required and coupled that guidance with technical support, appropriate tools, and resources, then USAID could institutionalize CLA in the Program Cycle."

MAY
Community
Connector
learning review
conducted
in Uganda

JUL
First CLA
Maturity Tool
pilot at USAID/
West Africa
Regional Mission

Inaugural CLA
Case Competition
launches

AUG
Second CLA
Maturity Tool
pilot at USAID/
Regional
Development
Mission for Asia

SEP
Third CLA
Maturity Tool
pilot at USAID/
Uganda

2014
OCTOBER

2015
JANUARY

SEPTEMBER

LEARNING

Realized the value of tacit knowledge sharing and actively discussing our values. LEARN establishes its Knowledge Drop internal blog and the "Walking the Talk" working group. These become the cornerstones of LEARN's culture. (FEB)

"More people are doing CLA than we thought." Entries to the 2015 CLA Case Competition surpass expectations and we learn that CLA is happening more widely than anticipated. (JUN)

Building trust and strong relationships intentionally with our clients is essential to success. In a Reflection Friday, LEARN hears about our clients and identified effective techniques for working with them. (JUL)

An in depth "learning review" of the USAID/Uganda Community Connector project demonstrates how adaptive mechanisms can work in practice. We learn that the people who implement the work are just as critical. (SEP)

"A review of organizational change literature shows that having champions is critical for creating and sustaining change." In our context, LEARN notes that technical and support offices within USAID play an important role in championing CLA. (SEP)

"So cool-ly done. I'm really looking forward to this Reflection Friday. And I love the climate the management team is setting up for our group." LEARN's first Reflection Friday is focused on meditation and an exercise on future planning. (JAN)

Planning and flexibility are essential for successful TDYs. LEARN travels to USAID/Central Asia Regional Mission and learns that time and flexibility are needed for its plans and recognizes that there are multiple factors that lead to decisions that may not all be under our control. (MAR)

Testing the CLA Maturity Tool (Version 3) with USAID/West Africa shows that missions see value in this kind of process and that we need to clarify the language of CLA. (JUL)

"There is a tension between the concern that mandating CLA will reduce it to a box-ticking exercise and compromise the quality of learning and a recognition that only required things get prioritized and therefore, accomplished." (SEP)

One year in, LEARN has identified the human and financial resources that enable CLA, including clear roles and responsibilities, hiring, training, the evaluation of staff on CLA-related knowledge and skills, and incorporating CLA into support activities. LEARN notes some examples of "CLA in action" but they lack context about whether they are "working" or what impact they have. Mission and DC-based stakeholders consistently request examples to help contextualize CLA. (SEP)

CONTEXT

OCT → Program Cycle Network launches

FEB → Administrator Rajiv Shah leaves USAID

MAR → USAID/Uganda hosts CLA Week

Phase 1
OCTOBER 2015 – SEPTEMBER 2016

OUTPUTS

OCT
First CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking at USAID/Kosovo

NOV
First *Moving the Needle* learning event

61
cases submitted to the 2015 CLA Case Competition

FEB
Workstream to build the evidence base for CLA launches

MAR
CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking at USAID/Cambodia

APR
Broad Agency Announcement process facilitated with USAID/Guatemala

MAY
10-week Program Office support TDY to USAID/Democratic Republic of the Congo

First CLA Maturity Tool Facilitation Training conducted with USAID/Senegal

JUN
Second CLA Case Competition held

6
In-person TDYs conducted

JUL
2-day CLA Training held

CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking at USAID/Mozambique

SEP
CLA Framework and Maturity Tool formally launches

Program Cycle Dashboard launches

EB4CLA Literature Review published

2015 OCTOBER   **2016** JANUARY   SEPTEMBER

LEARNING

→ "The visualization of the CLA Maturity Tool gives us a concrete way to talk about CLA." The CLA Framework and Maturity Tool provide a holistic yet detailed way to consider how best to integrate CLA within the Program Cycle and support CLA through enabling conditions. (OCT)

→ "Large events, like Moving the Needle, are an effective way to show legitimacy." This first large-scale CLA event demonstrates that there is a lot of interest in CLA from the international development sector. The CLA Framework makes its public debut and receives positive feedback. (NOV)

→ Building the evidence base for CLA (EB4CLA) proves to be more challenging than expected. LEARN conducts a pause and reflect on how to approach the study of CLA's contribution to development outcomes. (FEB)

→ "How we talk about CLA is key." LEARN refines how it talks about CLA concepts and approaches. By adjusting facilitation approaches, the CLA Self-Assessment and Action Planning process can be tied to other processes, like the CDCS mid-course stocktaking. (MAR)

→ Revisions to Program Cycle guidance include linkages between CLA and other monitoring and evaluation processes. LEARN works to become well-versed in other Program Cycle processes and requirements to better integrate them and make stronger connections. (APR)

→ "Scoping new activities is a nuanced process." LEARN refines its activity scoping process to include clearer connections to behavior change, decision-making, and objectives. (MAY)

→ Demand builds for the CLA Maturity Tool in French. LEARN hosts a "training of trainers" to teach staff at USAID/Senegal how to facilitate the CLA Maturity Tool Self-Assessment and Action Planning process. This basic facilitation guidance is developed, tested, and adapted over the next two years and the tool is translated into French. (MAY)

→ The components and definitions of CLA become standardized in Version 7 of the CLA Maturity Tool. This becomes the organizing principle for all of LEARN's work going forward, including blogs, the 5-day CLA training, the CLA Toolkit, and the organizational structure of USAID Learning Lab. (SEP)

→ "There was evidence that aspects of CLA contributed to improved organizational performance and development outcomes. No research looked at CLA concepts holistically. Our EB4CLA work was filling a gap." The EB4CLA Literature Review shows that evidence on development outcomes still limited. LEARN realizes the importance of talking about the impact of CLA on organizational effectiveness. (SEP)

CONTEXT

OCT → LEARN receives first buy-in from the USAID Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance

DEC → Gayle Smith becomes Administrator of USAID

MAR → Standard Foreign Assistance Indicators are updated and streamlined

APR → Administrator Smith says "USAID has gotten real about evaluation"

SEP → USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning revises ADS 201 to include mandatory CLA requirements

Phase 2

OUTPUTS

OCT
3-day CLA Training held

CLA Initiative for Measurement (CLAIM) Network launches

24%
of CLA Champions are USAID staff in positions of leadership

NOV
Learning Dojo launches

Second *Moving the Needle* learning event

"During our TDY, one staff member said, "Why don't we collaborate like this all the time?"

JAN
5-day CLA Training held

CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking at USAID/Jamaica

FEB
CLA at USAID podcast series premieres

MAR
CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking at USAID/Malawi

5-day CLA Training held

"Great job matching content to facilitation techniques. Thank you for recognizing how adults learn."
— CLA trainee

APR
Learning Agenda Landscape Analysis conducted

STIP integration report completed

17
TDYs conducted

MAY
Third CLA Case Competition held

JUN
USAID Office of Food for Peace Design Workshop held

First mission-based CLA Training held at USAID Asia Regional Training Center

80%
of missions (4 out of 5) targeted with CLA technical assistance had gone on to integrate CLA more intentionally as a result of support from LEARN.

Following our technical assistance, a CLA champion has modified her position description to include more CLA responsibilities.

AUG
2015 CLA Case Competition Analysis and Deep Dive conducted

SEP
Program Cycle Learning Agenda learning questions developed

Analysis of Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and CLA conducted

First USAID Center for Resilience learning event

CLA buy-in from USAID/Kenya East Africa launches

2016 OCTOBER

2017 JANUARY

SEPTEMBER

LEARNING

There is a critical call for evidence. The CLA Literature Review blog receives the highest unique pageviews of all blogs we've written since the start of LEARN. The briefer and full report continues to be among the highest downloaded resources over the lifetime of the contract. (OCT)

Investments in CLA increase through LEARN buy-ins. In the second year of the contract, LEARN expands from two buy-ins (for a total of $1.46M) to 18 new buy-ins totalling $4.9M. (OCT)

"For mid-course stocktaking, missions need data and to be familiar with their strategy." After LEARN facilitates a mid-course stocktaking with USAID/Jamaica, the mission reflects on the challenges of making strategy-level decisions without useful data from a functioning and socialized PMP. (JAN)

Missions are willing to invest in building their CLA capacity. USAID/Kenya and East Africa (KEA) invests funds in LEARN to facilitate the 5-day CLA training course. (JUN)

MEL has to be driven by the L. A LEARN TDY to USAID/Vietnam with PPL Leadership leads to the Mission beginning a project MEL plan with learning to drive their monitoring and evaluation needs. (AUG)

Creating connections and facilitating networks is a potential path to accelerating change. LEARN helps create and facilitate a group of USAID Washington Champions working on similar learning initiatives in various parts of the Agency. This voluntary group of Champions, self-named the Learning Dojo, is highly motivated to share and learn from others. (OCT)

"MTN is an important event for PPL leadership to more explicitly connect dots and voice support for CLA approaches." 90% of USAID staff say they are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with MTN 2016. As one participant explains, "The whole day was wonderfully planned, organized, and executed; everything flowed smoothly and made the conference a real joy to attend. I thought the speakers were great and the small group sessions were helpful." (NOV)

"There is a strong positive correlation between composite factors for collaboration, learning, and job satisfaction." LEARN examines results from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) specifically related to collaboration, learning, and employee satisfaction. Given the suggested relationship between job satisfaction and improved performance, this could indicate that collaborating and learning on teams has a positive impact on team, office/bureau and the Agency's performance. (APR)

"In USAID/KEA, leadership support for CLA impacts how much it takes hold." The Mission Director, a CLA Champion, challenges staff to do things differently. (SEP)

CONTEXT

NOV → Donald Trump elected President of the United States

JAN → Donald Trump sworn in as 45th President of the United States

New National Security memo includes role for USAID

PPL's Wade Warren named Acting Administrator of USAID

JUL → Mark Green is confirmed as USAID Administrator

AUG → USAID changes its mission statement

SEP → Mark Green begins his tenure as USAID Administrator and launches a transformation and reorganization initiative

Center for Global Development publishes "Advancing the Evidence Agenda at USAID"

USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning makes additional revisions to ADS 201

Phase 2

OCTOBER 2017 – SEPTEMBER 2018

OCT
USAID Office of Food for Peace CLA Week held at USAID/Ethiopia

Field-based portfolio review conducted at USAID/Azerbaijan

CLA Toolkit formally launches on USAID Learning Lab and ProgramNet

NOV
Mission of Leaders Framework developed at USAID/Mexico

28
Missions engaged

15
Missions with documented evidence of CLA integration

JAN
Buy-in from Bureau for Africa's Economic Growth, Environment, and Agricultureal Division (EGEA) launched

CLA Case Map launched on USAID Learning Lab

143
new and existing CLA champions

FEB
USAID LEARN Measures of Success developed

MAR
TDY to USAID/Burma for CDCS 1.0 support and introduction to the Journey to Self-Reliance

CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking at USAID/Rwanda

First Program Cycle Learning Agenda pause and reflect session held

APR
Program Cycle Longitudinal Study interviews conducted at Uganda, El Salvador, Vietnam, and Guinea and Sierra Leone Mission

CLA Initiative for Measurement (CLAIM) Network concluded

Fourth CLA Case Competition held

MAY
Thought Leaders in Learning podcast series premiered

2-day CLA workshop for Mission Leadership held at USAID/Kenya and East Africa

JUN
Third *Moving the Needle* learning event held

Multi-Donor Learning Partnership launched

JUL
Evidence Base for CLA Dashboard launched on USAID Learning Lab

205
instances of CLA integration observed

75%
of all instances of CLA integration were voluntary

129%
increase in trainees' confidence levels to develop a CLA action plan across two trainings with 50 participants

SEP
CDCS Mid-Course Stocktaking Online Module launched on USAID Learning Lab

OUTPUTS

2017 OCTOBER

2018 JANUARY

LEARNING

LEARN's measures of success are not flexible enough. What we now know is that our measures of success were predictive of what we knew then to be true; we did not predict how much LEARN's services would be demanded in our final year or how the type of our work would evolve. (FEB)

"Constraints to longitudinal studies include USAID's ability to program quickly, plan beyond 5 year cycles, and staff bandwidth to co-create and implement." Timeline, bandwidth, and decision-making by PPL slowed the start, making a truly longitudinal study impossible. (APR)

"18 months is too little time for a Learning Network to mature, especially one that is attempting to develop and test methodologies for measuring CLA." The CLA Initiative for Measurement (CLAIM) Learning Network concludes. Grantees' maturity of CLA is mixed and therefore impacts how far each grantee can get in a condensed amount of time.(APR)

"Simple interventions can lead to deep engagement in organizational, culture, and process change." What looked like a simple task of designing and implementing a design workshop for FFP turns into a deep engagement in organizational, culture and process change for two years after creating an experience where clients want more. (MAY)

"We need to go beyond our Results Framework and put specific processes and systems in place to reinforce intended behavior change." This learning leads to changing LEARN's scoping documents. (APR)

"Organizational development needs a longer term horizon than some USAID missions enable." In working with USAID/Burma, LEARN recognized the challenge of supporting organizational development in mission environments with short-term staffing cycles. (AUG)

CONTEXT

OCT → USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning pauses the CDCS process until they can provide additional guidance on the Journey to Self-Reliance

JAN → USAID announces the formulation of a new Policy Framework
→ USAID staff suspend work on joint redesign process with State Department

APR → USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning makes additional revisions to ADS 201
JUN → USAID releases metrics for the Journey to Self-Reliance

AUG → USAID releases first Risk Appetite statement
SEP → The Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) initiative begins
→ GAO releases report stating that few agencies have moved ahead on using metrics to inform policy decisions

Phase 3
OCTOBER 2018 – MARCH 2020

LEARN
END OF
CONTRACT
REPORT

OUTPUTS

OCT
USAID Office of Food for Peace Design Workshop After Action Learning Event held

82
Missions engaged

JAN
2018 CLA Case Competition Analysis and Deep Dive conducted

5-day CLA Training using FSN facilitators held at USAID/KEA

MAR
PIVOT Cohort launched as part of EGEA buy-in

Fifth CLA Case Competition held

MAY
Review of USAID Office of Food For Peace Refine and Implement Approach held

"A Guide to Hiring Adaptive Employees" published

JUL
ProgramNet 2.0 launches

OCT
ResilienceLinks website launched

USAID Learning Lab receives design updates

Digital Investment Tool launched

847
Documented instances of CLA integration

FEB
5 Years of Learning: LEARN's Close-Out event held

500+
members in the CLA CoP

DEC
Half-day workshop for Theory of Change in Project Design launched

375
new and existing champions

FEB
STIP Assessment standard operating procedure developed

Introduction to CLA in the Program Cycle online module launched on USAID Learning Lab and in USAID University

444
CLA Case Competition entries received in total

JUN
Fourth *Moving the Needle* learning event held

Self-Reliance Learning Agenda questions finalized and published on USAID.gov

Through facilitating the process of SRLA Learning Questions, one of our clients said: "Explicit attempts at team building across bureaus/cultures has paid off and serves as an important model moving forward."
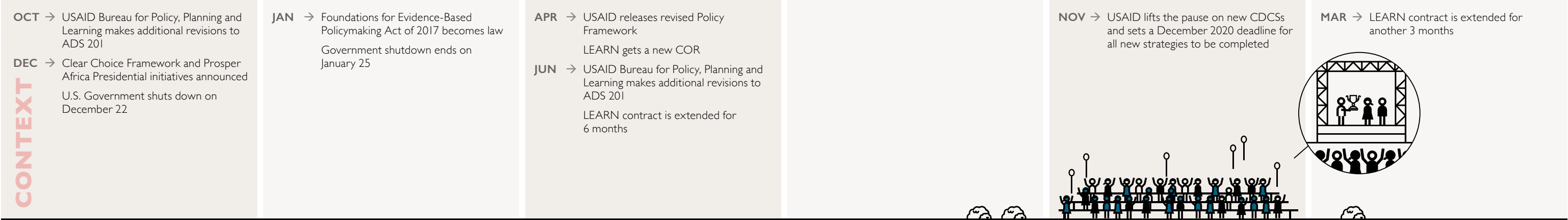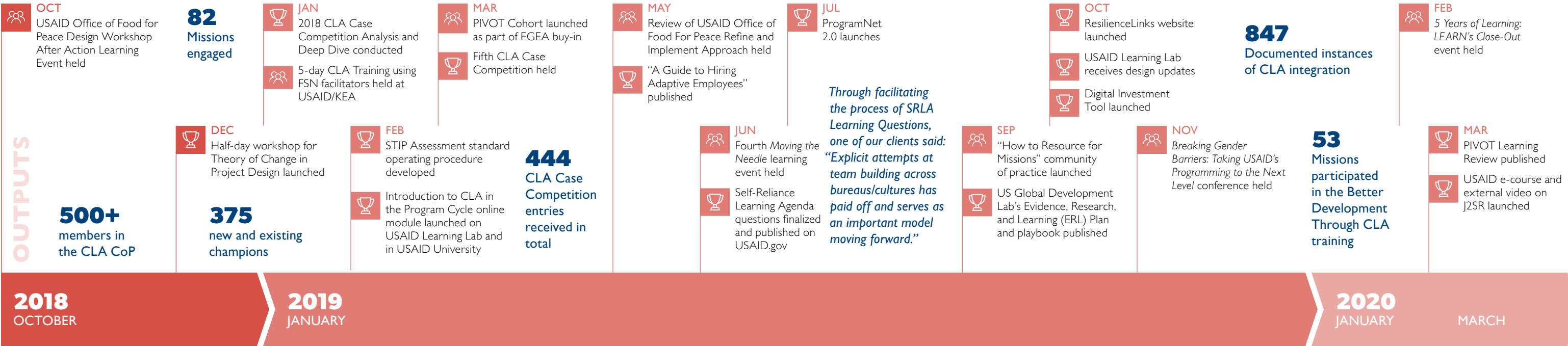
SEP
"How to Resource for Missions" community of practice launched

US Global Development Lab's Evidence, Research, and Learning (ERL) Plan and playbook published

NOV
Breaking Gender Barriers: Taking USAID's Programming to the Next Level conference held

53
Missions participated in the Better Development Through CLA training

MAR
PIVOT Learning Review published

USAID e-course and external video on J2SR launched

2018 OCTOBER | 2019 JANUARY | 2020 JANUARY | MARCH

LEARNING

"We learned through our work with FFP that deeper impact requires changing process and structure, not just the skills, motivations, or behaviors of individuals in the system. All are necessary." (OCT)

Submissions to the 2019 CLA Case Competition highlight the linkages between CLA and J2SR. CLA approaches help USAID missions and implementing partners to work more effectively with local actors, country partners, and other stakeholders to generate and share learning that can be used to adapt development programs so they are more effective in supporting country self-reliance. (MAR)

Two year of work with the U.S. Global Development Lab (Lab)'s Development Infomatics team and many iterations of the Digital Investment Tool, show the importance of basing our buy-in scopes of work on an objective, rather than a tool or solution, to enable greater adaptability. (OCT)

The pilot PIVOT capacity building model shows promise. In the PIVOT Learning Review, one Mission Director says, "This model of building a team of interested people from across offices—to learn technical and leadership skills, and have dedicated time and space to think and plan around a priority issue for the Agency, to meet and learn from other, similar teams from other Missions, and access support from across the Agency—that's an important new model." (MAR)

More than 50% of the conversations in the CLA Community of Practice are organic. This shows that there is energy and peer-learning happening around CLA that is not spearheaded by LEARN—an important signal of sustainability. As one member says, "I see active participation from members on issues raised and I would say the CLA CoP is a go-to platform for seeking experiences, best practices, materials/tools and clarifications around CLA." (JAN)

In co-facilitating our first CLA training with our FSN colleagues in Kenya, we learned that training FSNs on how to train others on CLA is a sustainable and empowering model. It also strengthens the connections between CLA and a mission's work for many participants. (JAN)

In producing our Hiring Adaptive Employees resource, we learned that there was a lot of interest about how to hire adaptive employees from other parts of the Agency, including OAA and HCTM. (MAR)

The Lab's CLA efforts, supported by LEARN, resulted in tangible outcomes, making the case that organizational learning contributes to organizational effectiveness. One of our clients shared that, "Teams at the Lab are hiring for adaptive mindsets. They are using intentional questions about adaptive mindsets in the workplace which has enabled them to hire managers who are able to operate in complexity and ambiguity." (OCT)

CONTEXT

OCT → USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning makes additional revisions to ADS 201

DEC → Clear Choice Framework and Prosper Africa Presidential initiatives announced

U.S. Government shuts down on December 22

JAN → Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2017 becomes law

Government shutdown ends on January 25

APR → USAID releases revised Policy Framework

LEARN gets a new COR

JUN → USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning makes additional revisions to ADS 201

LEARN contract is extended for 6 months

NOV → USAID lifts the pause on new CDCSs and sets a December 2020 deadline for all new strategies to be completed

MAR → LEARN contract is extended for another 3 months

ANNEX A:
LEARN CONTRACT BUY-INS

The LEARN Contract was designed to allow for interested USAID missions and operating units who wanted to access LEARN's services to buy into the mechanism. Over the life of the contract, these buy-ins came to represent more than 52% of LEARN's total funding, while 47% of the funding was provided by the contract holder, PPL's Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research, and managed by USAID's CLA team. The ratio of buy-ins to "core" CLA funding grew over the years as demand and reputation grew. It is important to note that in the case of each buy-in, the CLA team was involved in the scoping process to ensure that each buy-in supported integrating and institutionalizing collaboration, learning and adapting practices within USAID.

In total, 32 different missions, operating units, and independent offices bought into LEARN through 37 buy-ins:

BUREAU FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND LEARNING

PPL Learning Agenda: Supported the development of a PPL Learning Agenda by conducting a landscape analysis of existing bureau learning agendas. Developed dissemination strategies to share with the entire Agency.

Self-Reliance Learning Agenda (joint buy-in from PPL and the Lab): Supported both the development process for and a set of products related to the Self-Reliance Learning Agenda (SRLA), which is intended to generate, collect, synthesize, and disseminate evidence and learning, and facilitate their use to inform USAID's policies, programs, and operations.

OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Emerging Donors: Built the evidence base of successful approaches, innovative practices, and ongoing challenges facing emerging donors; developed an Emerging Donors Toolkit; and supported a peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing event between USAID missions and emerging donor country counterparts.

Development Cooperation Bilateral Engagement Assessment: Performed an in-depth assessment of the office's strategic approach to engagement with bilateral and multilateral donors, covering the period 2012–2016.

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC AND PROGRAM PLANNING

ProgramNet: Maintained and updated the ProgramNet website, supported virtual events and other knowledge-sharing opportunities.

Program Cycle Support: Provided strategy and design guidance to support the Program Cycle.

OFFICE OF AA/COMMUNICATIONS

Supported the communications efforts of PPL's Front Office.

OFFICE OF POLICY

Worked with the Policy Office to conduct comprehensive assessments of USAID's Countering Violence Extremism and Insurgency Policy and USAID's Youth and Development Policy.

USAID FORWARD TEAM

Developed Non-Permissive Environments (NPE) assessment process and toolkit.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Developed Government-to-Government knowledge products and training modules and materials on working with local organizations.

U.S. GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT LAB

CENTER FOR AGENCY INTEGRATION

Developed a Science, Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (STIP) methodology and assessment to identify country context and opportunities to implement STIP; captured lessons on implementation of STIP with the Lab's Knowledge Partners (namely bilateral missions in India and Indonesia, as well as RDMA). Conducted a KM assessment of Communities of Practice. Designed and led a series of STIP evaluations.

CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

Supported the roll-out and uptake of the Agency's Research Policy and facilitated a stakeholder meeting on the Public Access Data policy.

CENTER FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Scenario Planning: Worked with the GeoCenter's Futures Team to support the development of curriculum and facilitation of two regional workshops (in Ukraine and Thailand) on scenario planning as a tool in development planning.

Support for Tools, Platforms, and Communities: Developed adaptive management tools, strategies, and implementation plans for communities of practice, and conducted user testing of the Center's digital playbook. With the Development Informatics Team, co-created a Digital Investment Tool to ensure that USAID and its implementing partners consider best practices, based on the Principles for Digital Development, when developing digital systems.

OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Utilization Assessment: Conducted an assessment of the Lab's use of evidence in its programs and decision-making process.

ERL Plan Support: Supported the development and roll-out of the Evidence, Learning and Research (ERL) Plan, a 'handover' resource that will be piloted with advisors, and a set of resources on hiring adaptive managers. Provided monitoring support to the Lab on adaptations made based on the ERL plan including outcome harvesting.

BUREAU FOR FOOD SECURITY

Designed and facilitated a 2-day version of the CLA Training for bureau staff.

CENTER FOR RESILIENCE

Built a central online platform for knowledge management and learning, supported resilience coordination across bureaus and missions, supported technical capacity building, and supported communication needs.

BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

OFFICE OF FOOD FOR PEACE

Facilitated the development and implementation of a research and program-level learning agenda. Assessed the value of FFP's Refine and Implement (R&I) approach and identified opportunities to capture and share knowledge on FFP programming. Facilitated the DFSA design process for four countries. Piloted training on facilitating multi-stakeholder processes.

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

SAF Assessment: Conducted an assessment of the Standard Assessment Framework and its utility.

KM Support: Conducted a knowledge management assessment for the Center and developed an action plan to address needs.

BUREAU FOR AFRICA

Provided video capture and production support for the Bureau's Africa Evaluations Summit. Recorded key sessions and produced short videos.

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT–ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE DIVISION (EGEA)

Supported the EGEA team to deliver on the Agency's shift to deploying more enterprise-driven approaches to development, engaging the private sector, and applying cross-sectoral solutions. Designed and implemented a pilot cohort of six African missions in the Practical, InnoVative, On-the-job Training (PIVOT) program to empower change teams to transform how their missions integrate private sector engagement.

BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, EDUCATION, AND ENVIRONMENT

OFFICE OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (GenDev)

Designed and facilitated the Breaking Gender Barriers Conference to bring together USAID staff, partners, and leading practitioners to celebrate achievements, overcome challenges, and inspire collaborative action for improving development outcomes through gender equality and women's empowerment.

USAID MISSIONS

USAID/Azerbaijan: Supported the design and implementation of field-based portfolio reviews and a mission-wide staff retreat to focus on the creation of a CLA enabling environment within the mission, while also dealing with other issues such as morale, FSN leadership, communication, etc.

USAID/Burma: Provided strategy development support to the mission and supported the development of a mission "Learning and Adapting" organizational development platform.

USAID/Cambodia: Designed and facilitated a mission-wide CDCS mid-course stocktaking exercise.

USAID/Democratic Republic of Congo: Supported the development and rollout of the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP), CLA integration, a knowledge management assessment, and a digital Mission Information Portal.

USAID/Ethiopia: Delivered two offerings of the 5-day CLA training for the mission.

USAID/Guatemala: Designed and facilitated two Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) workshops with local partners targeting at-risk youth in the Western Highlands region. Conducted research on the pros and cons of investing in different components of the education sector in Guatemala.

USAID/Haiti: Deliver a Scenario Planning workshop as part of the mission's strategy development.

USAID/Jamaica: Conducted a Local Capacity Development Mapping exercise in order to inform activity designs. Facilitated a CDCS mid-course stocktaking exercise.

USAID/Kenya and East Africa: Provided technical resources and support that enabled the mission to develop and implement various CLA activities for teams across the Kenya and East Africa Regional operating units. Provided support to the mission's development of its CDCS, helping the mission take a CLA approach to strategy development and especially stakeholder consultation. Delivered three offerings of the 5-day CLA training to mission staff.

USAID/Mexico: Conducted an organizational development assessment and supported the mission to develop a "Mission of Leaders" initiative.

USAID/Rwanda: Designed and facilitated a mission-wide CDCS mid-course stocktaking exercise.

USAID/Southern Africa Regional: Conducted initial in-depth TDY to work with the mission on self-assessment and documentation of its current status related to CLA, as well as current gaps and resources related to its strategy development process.

Joint Caucasus Buy-in from USAID/Armenia, USAID/Azerbaijan, and USAID/Georgia: Designed and delivered an offering of the 5-day CLA training for staff from these three missions.

ANNEX B: HOW USAID HAS ENABLED LEARN'S SUCCESS: LEARN'S REFLECTIONS FROM YEAR 5

Our success is owed in large part to how USAID's Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (LER) designed the contract and how the CLA team, along with other USAID activity managers from across the Agency, manage their activities with us. The LEARN team held a team-wide reflection to answer the question: *What has USAID done to enable our success?* We have organized our key reflections below according to the Program Cycle—activity design and activity implementation. But before we get there, here's a quick summary of our top three takeaways.

Top three USAID enabling conditions for LEARN's success:

1. Creating a statement of objectives contract that enabled significant adaptability during implementation

2. Co-creating activity scopes and sharing accountability for achieving outcomes between USAID and LEARN staff

3. A COR and other activity managers who manage adaptively and in the spirit of true partnership

ACTIVITY DESIGN

- During the design of the solicitation and contract, LER created an **adaptable mechanism** that is objectives-based. Known as a **statement of objectives**, the contract lays out high-level results while providing flexibility as to how those results should be achieved.

- In addition, the contract identifies **very few set deliverables** other than biannual reports, a final contract report, and trip reports. This has enabled flexibility to co-create with clients, in real-time, scopes and deliverables that are responsive to longer-term strategy as well as near-term opportunities and needs.

- The contract enables USAID LEARN staff to apply for facilities **access**. This has provided us with easier access to Washington offices and missions, access to USAID's internal platforms and Google Suite, and USAID email addresses to support activities such as ProgramNet, the CLA Community of Practice, etc. All of this enables close collaboration with USAID counterparts, helping LEARN staff to propose ways to add value to USAID's work.

- The contract was **adequately resourced** to achieve results. In addition, the contract provided significant **budget flexibility**, enabling adaptive management when necessary.

ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION

Our reflections on what USAID has done during implementation to enable LEARN's success fell neatly under three components borrowed from the CLA Framework: Culture, Processes, and Resources.

Culture

- USAID's **openness to new ideas and input** from the LEARN team has allowed us to innovate.

  Staff stories to highlight this enabling condition: Many LEARN staff, across buy-ins and CLA team work, highlighted USAID counterparts' openness to our ideas. On our CLA team support work, this included the CLA Maturity Tool, the first CLA Case Competition, and Moving the Needle. USAID counterparts even helped us pilot one of our failed ideas (the CLA simulation we attempted to develop in Year 1) as a learning experience, building trust and giving us space to try, innovate, and sometimes misstep.

- We are **treated as partners** with expertise. We are given space to share **alternative perspectives**, which sometimes prevail, because our opinions matter to our USAID colleagues.

- We are given and expected to take **time to reflect** on our work, independently and jointly with USAID counterparts.

  Staff story to highlight this enabling condition: USAID counterparts join us for our annual Big Picture Reflection. One staff member noted that during the last Big Picture Reflection, when she was still new, USAID staff made her feel welcome and encouraged her to actively participate.

- We have developed **strong, trusting relationships** and constantly **exchange up-to-date information**. This provides the LEARN team with context about USAID's operating environment that enables us to perform our work better.

Processes

- The CLA team encouraged us to undertake a **tacit knowledge capture** process during start-up. It enabled us to interview USAID staff and understand our operating context better, and ultimately provided us with critical information to be more effective in our institutional support.

- Because both USAID and LEARN use **Google Suite**, barriers to knowledge management were low. We are able to see each other's calendars and share and work in documents together, making our collaboration more efficient.

- After the first year, we all learned that clarity on **roles and responsibilities and decision-making authority** was critically important to getting work done efficiently. We adapted our scoping processes with USAID to provide this clarity, including the use of RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) charts.

Resources

- Many of the enabling conditions under resources are covered above under Activity Design.

- USAID assigned **CORs who were adept adaptive managers** (see more on this below) and who worked in true partnership with the LEARN leadership team.

- USAID **supported our approach to hiring**, which included ensuring new staff were skilled in collaborating, learning, and adapting (even if they were not familiar with that terminology) and shared our team values.

  Staff story to highlight this enabling condition: Originally, LEARN's approach to staffing buy-ins was largely focused on recruiting short-term consultants. After some rough starts, we realized that we needed staff who shared our CLA values and could be used across multiple buy-ins. Our COR was supportive of this approach and in some ways took a risk because we still needed more buy-ins to come through to fully cover 100% of a staff person's time. The risk paid off and ultimately increased the quality of our work and availability of resources to respond to requests.

- USAID also supported our **investment in the enabling conditions on LEARN** (e.g., LEARN developing its own values, Reflection Fridays, etc.).

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CORS, ACTIVITY MANAGERS, AND LEADERSHIP

As we reflected, we realized the importance of the people involved - specifically our counterparts at USAID who engaged with us in open, honest, and trusting ways. Our CORs were and are models of a CLA approach to managing a contract. We identified several key behaviors or characteristics of our CORs that enabled our success; many of these characteristics could also be said of our activity managers across the Agency:

- Behaves in alignment with USAID's **Leadership Philosophy**, specifically:

  - **Active listening:** consistently asks good questions, maintains a respectful and engaged tone, and takes our input into consideration.

  - **Well-being:** does not put excessive demands on the LEARN team, enabling us to maintain work/life balance and bring our best selves to our work.

  - **Innovation:** encourages us to pilot, iterate, and learn from our experiences.

  - **Act and empower:** provides clear and timely decisions while also respecting the boundary between what is a COR decision vs. a LEARN leadership decision.

  - **Accountability:** follows through on what she says she will do.

- **Constant and transparent communication:** Our COR provides us with regular updates and is always available if we have a question via telephone, email, or chat. She also provides this opportunity across the team (not just for leadership) through weekly Office Hours.

- **Provides us important feedback from clients:** Our COR is a critical participant in our internal MERL processes. She interviews clients and provides us with their feedback regularly, informing how we approach our current and subsequent client engagements.

- **Advocate for our work:** Our COR communicates with other potential buy-in clients, facilitating connections between LEARN and potential clients and helping us set boundaries with current clients.

Ultimately, selecting a collaborative, learning-focused, and adaptive manager as our COR has been one of the most important reasons for our success.

Lastly, CLA team, LER office, and PPL leadership have also enabled LEARN's success by being advocates of CLA integration and LEARN's service provision. They have also enabled our COR and activity managers to partner with us in ways that models Program Cycle principles.