USAID Uganda’s Mission of Leaders Initiative

Mission Leadership Charter

We, the leaders of USAID/Uganda WILL...

• Maintain a common vision for our goals, objectives
• Be field focused
• Take informed risks, adapt to, and manage change
• Seek evidence and apply lessons learned so we leave things better than we find them
• Support and encourage work-life balance
• Give credit where it is due
• Ensure effective and transparent communication and feedback
• Promote a working environment of mutual respect, trust and integrity
• Build relationships to achieve development objectives

Vision
USAID Uganda has created a Mission of Leaders initiative to promote and realize the vision that ALL staff members have a leadership role to play, no matter where one sits in the organizational hierarchy and what role one plays within the Mission. The ability to lead, make connections, build relationships, influence, learn what works, know how to make a difference, manage development processes and change, administer resources, plan…all of these are required of our staff, our teams and our Mission. And to be successful in achieving USAID’s development objectives in Uganda, we must make sure that we are all equipped to execute this work effectively.

Approach
Our approach to leadership development recognizes the intersections among:

• The individual – the experiences, skills and commitment each of us bring to our work, and the ongoing investment required in personal effectiveness
• The team – whether that’s an individual’s ‘home’ office, a cross-sector project management team, or a short-term cross-functional task team
• The Mission – that we have an organizational culture all our own, a fusion of Agency-wide culture with that of the history and people of Uganda, our backgrounds and experiences

Components
The Mission of Leaders initiative includes mutually-reinforcing components that continue to evolve and adapt to the emerging needs of USAID Uganda’s staff and development agenda:

Leadership Charter – In 2012-13, USAID Uganda created and launched a Mission Leadership Charter, which articulates the leadership behaviors most critical to achieving USAID’s objectives in Uganda. Collaboratively developed through task teams and internal consultations, the charter is a tool for staff at all levels to understand expectations and to know what good leadership ‘looks like’ for the Mission, recognizing the broad array of circumstances and resulting leadership requirements. In order to bring the charter into daily work life, staff members have explored the role and relevance of the charter through dynamic and interactive exercises, scenarios and off-site workshops. A pilot ‘360’-type monitoring tool has provided a measure of individual and Mission-wide performance against the charter and the leadership behaviors it promotes.

Organizational Diagnostics – A foundation of the Mission of Leaders initiative has been a series of periodic ‘temperature checks’, whereby USAID Uganda staff contribute to and then receive the analysis for an assessment of staff engagement, as well as organizational issues and opportunities. Conducted with the help of an external consultant team, these diagnostics have informed a variety of organizational development activities, including talent management, internal communications, management structures and teambuilding.

Key Highlights: A Mission of Leaders is the vision of USAID Uganda that “Everyone has a leadership role to play for USAID to be successful”.

Leadership and Management: Overall Results
Insights Discovery™ – Insights Discovery™ was developed based upon the work of psychologist Carl Jung and captures individual preferences, across the axes of extrovert-introvert, sensing-intuition, and thinking-feeling. Insights Discovery™ has been tested across numerous cultures and 30 languages, maintaining strong reliability and validity. It uses the language of color to describe the unique traits of each individual, generating a profile booklet that illustrates that profile, as well as highlighting preferred communications styles and potential blind spots, for example. Soon after arrival, each new staff member is asked to complete an online evaluator; with the leadership of on-staff accredited Insights resources, the individual participates in a one-on-one and/or group workshop to receive his or her profile and accompanying briefing. The Mission organizes periodic all-hands workshops to leverage the self-awareness generated through the Insights Discovery™ experience, strengthen teams and develop interpersonal skills for enhanced engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

Leadership Training – Learning from success, USAID Uganda offers a tailored week-long leadership development course, modeled after the Agency’s Emerging Leaders Program. Designed to bolster skills and foster a leadership mindset, the training brings together nearly 30 representatives from across the Mission and seeks to support individual leadership approaches as well as serve as a launch pad for the participating cohort to enable change and continuous improvement throughout the Mission, its programs and partnerships.

Executive Coaching – A tailored approach to leadership development employed by USAID Uganda has been an Executive Coaching program, providing periodic coaching services to Mission leaders in supervisory positions. A combination of in-person and remote coaching sessions, the areas of focus are defined by the individual staff member, but are further informed by the periodic organizational diagnostics and the Mission Leadership Charter itself.

Staff Transition Management – An important extension of the Mission of Leaders initiative has been the design and execution of staff transition support strategies, including exit, on-boarding and knowledge transfer. USAID Uganda has launched an explicit approach to managing staff transitions that includes resources to support knowledge transfer (e.g. access to video exit interviews from outgoing staff), and transition teams that empower FSN staff while providing tailored support to offices undergoing a leadership change. The emergent program also includes an orientation to the unique elements of USAID Uganda, including the Mission of Leaders initiative.

Achievement
Our Mission of Leaders approach better equips us to:

- Institutionalize Collaborating, Learning & Adapting (CLA), yielding better programs to achieve our development objectives
- Create a vibrant, evolving and coherent culture, providing a deliberate investment in staff engagement and effectiveness
- Develop individual, team and organizational resilience to manage change – that which is coming from within the Agency and from our unique country context – and to seek and create change when it is called for, to learn and adapt
- Seek creative solutions, question our own mindset and expand possibilities for what we do
- Ensure Agency regulations are a platform for change, not a straightjacket
- Engage and influence externally, to maximize our development resources, while managing stakeholder relationships effectively

Learn More: To learn more about USAID Uganda’s Mission of Leaders initiative, check out:

CLA Case Competition on USAIDLearningLab.org
“Mission of Leaders” screencast on ProgramNet

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