



LOCAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING POLICY

Making the Shift: Principles for equitable partnerships.

- 4 Align capacity strengthening with local priorities.
- 5 Appreciate and build on existing capacities.
- 6 Be mindful of and mitigate the unintended consequences of our support for local capacity strengthening.
- 7 Practice mutuality with local partners.



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



WHAT WE HEARD

During the first annual Local Capacity Strengthening (LCS) Policy [Learning and Feedback Forum](#), we [asked partners](#)* and USAID staff what they saw as the shift in practices that the LCS Policy calls for.

The session explored the shifts in roles and actions needed to implement the last four principles of the [LCS Policy](#) focused on equitable partnerships.

Please review the [accompanying blog](#) on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#) for further information.

**All quotes in this resources are direct responses from participants during the 2023 LCS Forum.*

Four key themes emerged from session responses:

- 1 Shift to local leadership
- 2 Shift to improved partnerships
- 3 Shift to enhanced capacity strengthening
- 4 Shift to mutual trust, respect, and accountability

1 ELEVATE LOCAL LEADERSHIP



II

FROM

- Donor driven prioritization and leadership including prescribed sectors, interventions, and targets
- U.S.-based activity management
- Limited or insubstantial co-creation
- Donor driven monitoring, evaluation, and learning



TO

- Community participation in design *and* implementation
- Local management and decision making power
- Ongoing and meaningful co-design and co-creation
- Locally designed indicators; locally-led monitoring and evaluation

1 ELEVATE LOCAL LEADERSHIP MAKE THE SHIFT



RESOURCES

- [Co-creation guidance](#)
- [Reviewing MEL Plans through a locally-led development lens](#)
- [Locally Led Development Spectrum and Checklist](#)
- [Locally Led MEL Resource Page](#)
- [LCS Measurement guidance](#)
- [Practical Guides on Designing Effective Collective Action in USAID Programming](#)
- Applying LCS Policy principles: [Micro trainings](#) for principles [1](#) and [6](#)
- [Guidance on LCS Policy implementation from the Bureau for Democracy, Rights, and Governance](#)
- [Case study on government capacity for health systems](#)



“Not aligned: design what local partners can do rather than let them design what works for them (co-creation)”



“Strengthening and amplifying local initiatives already happening”

“Shift to: jointly creating the vision of what success will look and sound like from multiple perspectives”

2 IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS



II

FROM

- Overly complicated procedures and requirements
- Limited number of local partners in leadership roles
- Inadequate funding of operating costs
- Limited use of locally spoken languages



TO

- Building more flexible partnerships through iterative and adaptable activity designs
- Partnering with a diverse range of local partners, not just elite organizations
- Commit to supporting an organization's longer term goals by providing full and fair cost recovery
- Encouraging interpretation and translation from pre-award through implementation

2 IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS MAKE THE SHIFT

RESOURCES

- Pay for results and other [innovative financing models](#) that are simplified and less prescriptive
- Using [Refinement Periods](#)
- Refer new partners to the [WorkwithUSAID.gov](#) free resource hub to reduce information asymmetry
- Cover [indirect costs](#) of local and regional partners by using de minimis, fixed rates, effective direct costing, or NICRAs
- Use [phased acquisition](#) to simplify the asks of partners at the outset
- Translate [key documents](#), [solicitations](#), and trainings into common working languages
- Consider a diverse and inclusive range of partners from the [private sector](#), [faith based actors](#), [LGBTQI+](#) serving organizations, organizations led by [persons with disabilities](#), and more
- [Guidance on LCS Policy implementation from the Bureau for Management](#)
- [Case study on intentionally supporting diverse actors to address their priorities](#)



“Not funding operational cost because of a focus on the ‘activity’”



“Shift to local partners as equal partners in development and not just recipients of funds with stiff conditionalities”

3 REIMAGINE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING



II

FROM

- One size fits all approaches such as standard “off the shelf” training
- Imbalanced focus on compliance, risk management, and project deliverables



TO

- Demand-driven, contextually effective approaches to capacity strengthening such as mentoring and coaching
- Focus on local definitions of success, thinking beyond the life of an activity, and locally defined performance improvement targets

3 REIMAGINE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING MAKE THE SHIFT



RESOURCES

- Applying LCS principles: [Micro trainings](#) for principles [2](#), [3](#), and [4](#)
- LCS: [Guide to Distinguishing Tools](#)
- [CBLD-9 Measurement Guide](#)
- The updated [Non-US Pre-Award Survey \(NUPAS\)](#) which emphasizes the difference between risk management and capacity strengthening
- [Education and Local Capacity Strengthening Toolkit](#)
- [Guidance on LCS Policy implementation from the Bureau for Global Health](#)
- [Case study](#) on enhancing a market for capacity strengthening services



“Capacity strengthening focusing only on the skills needed to implement the project”



“Allowing local organizations to take control and ownership of their own capacity strengthening (rather than dictating what they ‘need’)”

4 FOSTER MUTUAL TRUST, RESPECT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY



FROM

- Power disproportionately held by USAID with limited opportunities for power sharing with local actors
- Risk posture and demeaning language that conveys the assumption that local partners do not have capacity
- Local partners accountable to USAID, not mutual accountability



TO

- Recognizing, valuing, learning from, and deferring to local knowledge and expertise
- Mutual accountability - meaningful feedback loops and learning between USAID, local partners, and communities

4 FOSTER MUTUAL TRUST, RESPECT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY MAKE THE SHIFT



RESOURCES

- [Accountability and Feedback Plans \(AFPs\)](#)
- Applying LCS Principles: [Micro trainings](#) for principles [5](#) and [7](#)
- [Report: Integrating Local Knowledge in Development Practice](#)
- [Toolkit for Advancing Local Knowledge](#) from USAID/Morocco
- USAID [Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning \(KMOL\) Policy](#)
- [Apply adaptive management practices to respond to feedback](#)
- Guidance Note on [Operationalizing the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation](#)
- [Case study on supporting CSOs to learn from one another](#)



“Shift from: accountability plans that only consider what the local actors need to do, but not what USAID / IPs need to do.”



“Local experience driving global learning rather than the other way around”

“Mutuality requires the donor to be open to ‘capacity assessment’- are they (are we as INGOs) being a good partner?”

NEXT STEPS

REFLECT

- How will your organization seek opportunities to hear directly from people rather than representatives of groups of local stakeholders about local priorities?
- What can your organization do to support local communities in identifying their strengths and envisioning ways they can use those assets to meet the needs of their communities?
- How will the programmatic theories of change and plans for MEL from local capacity strengthening investments be developed in collaboration with local actors?
- What resources will be required to support local capacity strengthening? What feedback and accountability mechanisms does your organization currently have in place or can you establish?



REVIEW

- [LCS Policy](#) available in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, and Kiswahili

REACH OUT

- Email LCSPolicyComments@usaid.gov for feedback, questions, or requests