

CLA MATURITY TOOL



**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

VERSION 7



This booklet includes optional questions for participants to consider discussing.

Themes for these additional questions include leadership, inclusion, and local ownership. If any of these themes are of particular interest to participants or naturally arise during conversation, the facilitator can introduce the relevant question(s) as part of the self-assessment after the group has voted and shared their examples related to the CLA maturity spectrum. Keep in mind that these additional questions are optional; the subcomponent cards already have sufficient content for engaging discussion.

Some subcomponents also include questions not tied to one of the themes listed above. These questions invite participants to explore their practice in more depth.

If the group includes one or more of these questions into the conversation, make sure to adjust the time for each self-assessment round accordingly, possibly adding an extra 15–20 minutes, although this time will vary.

DEFINITIONS

Leadership

For this tool, leadership represents those people in the organization with some level of power and influence, whether formal or informal. This includes those in formal positions of authority as well as people who are recognized by their colleagues as being role models, influencers or thought leaders. Everyone can and should be a leader. According to USAID's [leadership philosophy](#), leaders at all levels foster a culture of respect, learning and accountability by inspiring, listening, developing leaders, promoting well-being, innovating, acting and empowering and advancing accountability.

Inclusion

An approach that ensures that all people, including those who face discrimination and thus may have limited access to a country's benefits, legal protections, or social participation are fully included and can actively participate in and benefit from development processes and activities.

[Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations \(ADS 201 Additional Help\)](#)



Marginalized Groups

People who are typically denied full access to legal protection or social and economic participation and programs (such as police protection, political participation, access to healthcare, education, employment, etc.), whether in practice or in principle, for either historical, cultural, political, or other contextual reasons. Such groups may include but are not limited to: women and girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTI people, displaced persons, economic migrants, indigenous individuals and communities, youth and the elderly, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, people in lower castes, and people of diverse economic class and political opinions.

[Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations \(ADS 201 Additional Help\)](#)

Local Ownership

The commitment and ability of local actors—including the governments, civil society, the private sector, universities, individual citizens, and others—to prioritize, resource, and implement development, so that development outcomes have a greater potential to be sustained and generate lasting change without USAID assistance.

[ADS Chapter 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy](#)

COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING





COLLABORATING

Internal Collaboration

- **Leadership:** What is the role of leaders in promoting internal collaboration? What works well? Where, when or with whom do leaders struggle to foster collaboration? What are the obstacles?
- **Inclusion:** Whose voices tend to prevail in meetings and decision-making? How are power dynamics addressed, including those related to sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, disability, seniority, and hiring mechanism, etc.?
- **Local Ownership:** How are the expertise and local knowledge of FSN staff recognized and considered in decision-making?



COLLABORATING

External Collaboration

- **Leadership:** What is the role of leaders in promoting external collaboration? What works well? Where, when or with whom do leaders struggle to foster collaboration? What are the obstacles?
- **Inclusion:** Are we prepared to collaborate with people who think about development differently than we do? Do we always talk to the same stakeholders or do we consider diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups?
- **Local Ownership:** How do we collaborate with local stakeholders—is collaboration limited to consultations, or do we engage them in joint decision-making? Do we close feedback loops with people on the receiving end of assistance? Do we know or ask if local stakeholders perceive their collaboration with us as empowering and influential to decisions taken?



LEARNING

Technical Evidence Base

- **Leadership:** Do leaders value the use of evidence during portfolio reviews, stocktaking, etc. to inform decision-making? Are staff expected to base decisions or suggestions on evidence?
- **Inclusion:** Does the evidence we rely on reflect the experience of diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups? Is knowledge they create valued and used?
- **Local Ownership:** Do we involve local stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in the design, implementation, and analysis of studies and evaluations? Does their involvement have meaningful effects on the ultimate design, conduct of, and conclusions drawn from studies? Are evidence and findings disseminated to local stakeholders, including to the people on the receiving end of assistance?
- Evidence can fall on a spectrum of rigor and different decisions require different types of evidence and levels of rigor. Do you and your team value one kind of evidence over another?



LEARNING

Theories of Change

- **Leadership:** Do leaders prioritize high quality theories of change and encourage constructive questioning of them?
- **Inclusion:** How are diverse perspectives, such as those of marginalized groups, included in the development and implementation of the theory of change?
- **Local Ownership:** Do our theories of change consider local stakeholders, including marginalized groups, as drivers of change, not solely as beneficiaries of assistance? Are theories of change developed, validated with, and updated based on feedback from local stakeholders, including those on the receiving end of assistance?



LEARNING

Scenario Planning

- **Leadership:** Do leaders think about and encourage staff to consider potential context changes when planning?
- **Inclusion:** Are the specific concerns, vulnerabilities and priorities of diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups, taken into account in identifying which scenarios to look out for, and how to respond to them?
- **Local Ownership:** Are local knowledge sources used to inform context monitoring? Who is involved in analyzing what is learned? Are we validating our conclusions or assumptions with local knowledge sources?



LEARNING

M&E for Learning

- **Leadership:** Do leaders focus primarily on whether targets are being met, or do they encourage staff to think about why and how progress is being made (or not)?
- **Leadership:** Do leaders value the use of evidence during portfolio reviews, stocktaking, etc. to inform decision-making? Are staff expected to base decisions or suggestions on evidence?
- **Inclusion:** Are we involving diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups, in the design and implementation of MEL efforts to help meet the goals that they've identified for themselves?
- **Local Ownership:** Do we have feedback loops in place so that people who provide data also see or participate in its analysis? Are data and analyses shared with local stakeholders, including those on the receiving end of assistance, in ways that are accessible and useful for them?



ADAPTING

Pause & Reflect

- **Leadership:** What is the role of leaders in creating space for reflection? What has worked and where have there been challenges?
- **Inclusion:** Do we invite different voices and perspectives into our reflection? Are sessions planned when and where it's most convenient for all participants? How are power dynamics addressed?
- **Local Ownership:** Are local stakeholders involved in setting the agenda for pause & reflect sessions? Are we participating in pause & reflect sessions hosted by local stakeholders?
- Are existing meetings used to pause and reflect on strategies, projects and activities? Are these meaningful opportunities where evidence gets examined and decisions get made? Why or why not?



ADAPTING

Adaptive Management

- **Leadership:** Do leaders support and facilitate adaptive management? Do they exhibit the qualities of an adaptive manager (i.e., comfort with change, curiosity, etc)? Do they consider these qualities when hiring staff?
- **Inclusion:** Do local stakeholders, including marginalized groups, have a voice in decision-making processes on whether and how to adapt? Are the ramifications of our decisions considered from the perspectives of local stakeholders?
- **Local Ownership:** Do USAID and its partners engage local stakeholders, including people on the receiving end of assistance, in joint decision-making on whether and how to adapt? Is there transparency and shared accountability for decisions taken?



CULTURE

Openness

- **Leadership:** Do leaders model openness by setting the tone that they don't know everything, and genuinely want to hear feedback from others? What is their tone when asking difficult questions—constructive or punitive? Do they encourage staff to ask difficult questions in a constructive manner, share divergent perspectives, and/or try innovative approaches?
- **Inclusion:** Are we open to listening to divergent perspectives? Do we seek out and listen to all relevant voices, including marginalized voices?
- **Local Ownership:** Do we dedicate staff time and resources to listening directly to local actors, including those on the receiving end of assistance? Does the tone when interacting with local stakeholders demonstrate mutual respect, humility, and receptiveness to local feedback?
- Does the Mission use different feedback channels (in-person, written, anonymous, etc.) to create space for all staff to be open in a way that feels comfortable?



CULTURE

Relationships & Networks

- **Leadership:** Do leaders invest in developing strong, trusting relationships with mission staff and external stakeholders? Do leaders encourage staff to invest time to do the same?
- **Inclusion:** Do we foster connections with those who hold divergent perspectives or are on the periphery of the system, including those of marginalized groups, or are we insular and siloed?
- **Local Ownership:** Do we tap into, engage, and/or support networks of local development actors and resources relevant to our work? When conducting analyses, do we include USAID and other donors in the analysis to understand our effect on local networks, relationships, and systems?



CULTURE

**Continuous Learning
& Improvement**

- **Leadership:** Do leaders model continuous learning and improvement? Do they prioritize and allow staff to make time for learning and improvement?
- **Inclusion:** Is there fairness and equity around training opportunities (e.g., between different hiring mechanisms, staff types)?
- **Local Ownership:** Are local organizations funded by USAID provided with dedicated resources to make time for learning? Are they encouraged and allowed the autonomy to use iterative approaches that enable continuous learning and improvement?



PROCESSES

Knowledge Management

- **Leadership:** Is knowledge sharing (internal and external) encouraged? Do leaders model this behavior?
- **Inclusion:** Whose knowledge are we including? Has that changed over time? When sharing, how are we addressing access barriers (e.g., language, literacy, disability, technology)?
- **Local Ownership:** Do plans for knowledge sharing and dissemination prioritize local stakeholders and those on the receiving end of assistance? Are knowledge products relevant and accessible to them?



PROCESSES

Institutional Memory

- **Inclusion:** Do leaders recognize and value the institutional memory of long-serving members of the staff? Do they consider the organization's previous experience as part of the decision-making process to understand what has worked before and what hasn't?
- **Inclusion:** Whose knowledge are we including? Has that changed over time?
- **Inclusion:** When sharing, how are we addressing access barriers (e.g., language, disability, technology)? When transferring knowledge on the context, do we include information from or about marginalized groups?
- How do we handle staff transitions (regardless of hiring mechanism)? What processes are in place to capture tacit knowledge? What works and where do we struggle?



PROCESSES

Decision-Making

- **Leadership:** Do leaders involve the right people in decision-making, incorporate the necessary evidence, and document and share the rationale? Do leaders use effective decision-making processes so that decisions aren't constantly re-made?
- **Leadership:** Do leaders empower staff to make decisions appropriate to their position and authority?
- **Inclusion:** Who gets to decide? Do those affected by decisions, including marginalized groups, have a voice in the decision-making process?
- **Local Ownership:** Do local stakeholders, including those on the receiving end of assistance, exercise meaningful influence or power in decision-making processes that affect them?
- Are there bottlenecks that prevent staff from getting to a final decision in a timely way?



RESOURCES

Mission Resources

- **Leadership:** Do leaders prioritize CLA by investing resources in it, and encouraging staff to do the same?
- **Inclusion:** Is there fairness and equity around CLA-related training and leadership opportunities (e.g., between different hiring mechanisms, staff types)?
- **Local Ownership:** Are local firms or organizations considered when the mission is procuring CLA support? Do support mechanisms also provide CLA capacity building for local actors that is relevant to their priorities and goals?



RESOURCES

CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

- **Leadership:** Do leaders support/facilitate adaptive management by advocating for more adaptable mechanisms and integrating CLA into mechanisms?
- **Local Ownership:** Do agreements with local firms or organizations enable CLA by providing dedicated resources and ensuring sufficient autonomy to manage adaptively, allocate funding for CLA and hire staff with relevant skills?
- Do we consider qualities like leadership, flexibility, and facilitation when writing qualifications/approving key personnel for implementing mechanisms?

