



Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)

at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Roundtable: Improving Impact with Knowledge Management

AESIS/Nexus/Novo Nordisk

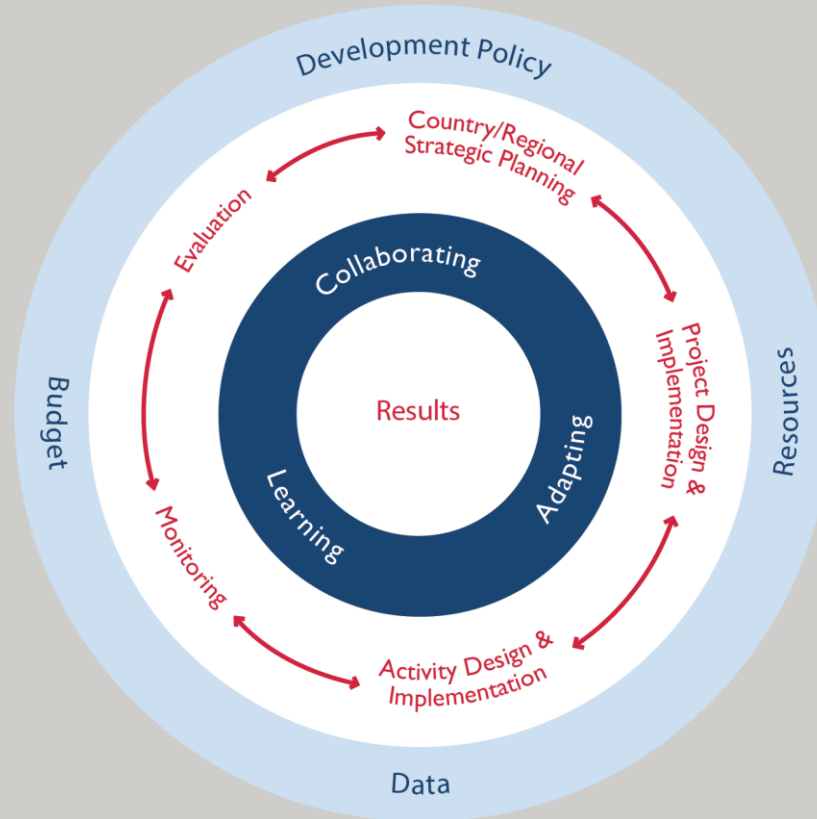
29 March, 2023

Stacey Young, USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning



Context/opportunity: Rebuilding USAID Program Cycle

- 2009/10
- Evaluation
- Country strategies



- Project planning, implementation
- Program monitoring
- **What else?**
Collaborating, Learning and Adapting

What often goes wrong in development..



Data & evidence stay on the shelf—programs have weak evidence base



Coordination is lacking, synergy is lost



Outdated practices are still used



Programs fit poorly with the context



Plans & implementation approaches remain static, even as things change



Development is donor-driven, not country-led or community-owned



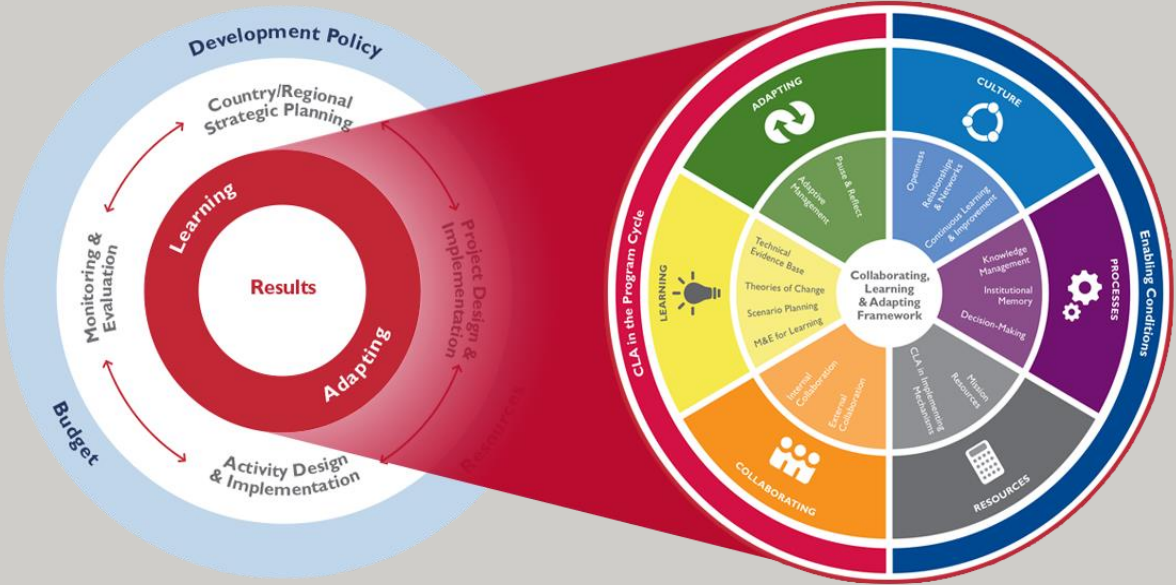
Influence is not used strategically



Implementation modes assume passive “beneficiaries” vs. active development agents

...collaborating, learning, and adapting can help!

Solution: Collaborating, Learning and Adapting integrated into the Program Cycle



2009-2014: Establishing CLA

2009-10

CLA co-created with **USAID/Uganda** as part of new country strategy process



2010-2011

USAID creates **Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL)**, introduces **Program Cycle** with **learning and adapting** component.

2011-2012

USAID/PPL builds out **program cycle policy guidance** and **capacity building**.



2012-2013

USAID Learning Lab and ProgramNet websites launched. First mission-based **CLA Advisor**.



2013-2014

USAID LEARN contract awarded. Over 30 missions integrating CLA into programming to some degree.



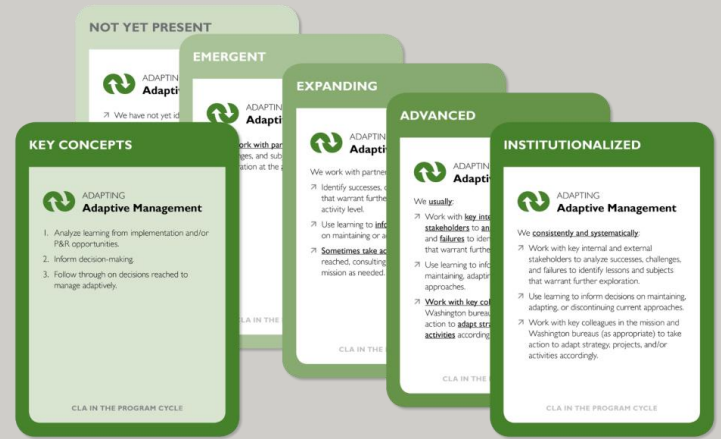
CLA in the Program Cycle

Enabling Conditions

 <p>Collaborating</p>	 <p>Learning</p>	 <p>Adapting</p>	 <p>Culture</p>	 <p>Processes</p>	 <p>Resources</p>
<p>Internal Collaboration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and prioritize other teams/offices for strategic collaboration. 2. Decide how to engage those teams/offices. 3. Collaborate with those teams/offices based on decisions reached. 	<p>Technical Evidence Base</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Track the technical evidence base. 2. Apply the technical evidence base in planning and implementation. 3. Contribute to/expand the technical evidence base. 	<p>Pause & Reflect</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Variety and purpose of pause & reflect opportunities. 2. Timeliness of pause & reflect opportunities to inform decision-making. 3. Quality of pause & reflect opportunities. 	<p>Openness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sense of comfort in sharing opinions and ideas. 2. Openness to hearing alternative perspectives. 3. Willingness to take action on new ideas. 	<p>Knowledge Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Source various types of knowledge from stakeholders. 2. Distill knowledge. 3. Share knowledge with stakeholders. 	<p>Mission Resources</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis CIA. 2. Professional development in CIA. 3. Procurement of CIA support.
<p>External Collaboration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>Theories of Change</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality of theories of change. 2. Testing and exploration of theories of change. 3. Awareness among stakeholders about theories of change and the learning that results from testing them. 	<p>Adaptive Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze learning from implementation and/or pause & reflect opportunities. 2. Inform decision-making. 3. Follow through on decisions reached to manage adaptively. 	<p>Relationships & Networks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of trusting relationships. 2. Exchange of up-to-date information. 3. Use of networks across the system to expand situational awareness. 	<p>Institutional Memory</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to institutional knowledge. 2. Staff transitions. 3. Contributions of Foreign Service Nationals to institutional memory. 	<p>CLA in Implementing Mechanisms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mechanism type and scope enables CIA. 2. Budgeting. 3. Staff composition and skills.
<p>Scenario Planning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify risks and opportunities through scenario planning. 2. Monitor trends related to scenarios. 3. Respond to and apply learning from monitoring. 	<p>M&E for Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 		<p>Continuous Learning & Improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff take time for learning and reflection. 2. Motivation for learning. 3. Use of iterative approaches that enables continuous improvement. 	<p>Decision-Making & Improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awareness of decision-making processes. 2. Autonomy to make decisions. 3. Appropriate stakeholder involvement in decision-making. 	

Collaborating, Learning and Adapting in the Program Cycle: CLA throughout program strategy, design, implementation and assessment

Enabling Conditions: organizational culture, processes, and resources that support collaborating, learning and adapting



2015-2020: Going to Scale

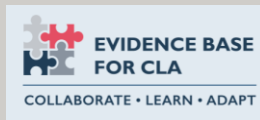
2015

CLA Maturity Tool developed; Program Cycle ADS guidance consultations; **CLA Case Competition** launched. First **Moving the Needle** event.



2016

Program Cycle **ADS Guidance updates** mandate certain CLA components. CLA Training developed. **Evidence Base for CLA** begins.



2017

First Regional CLA Training; **CLA Toolkit** launched; start of **Program Cycle Learning Agenda**.



2018

Leaders in Learning Podcast. First meeting of **Multi-Donor Learning Partnership (MDLP)**.

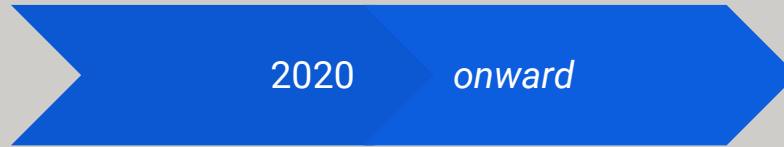


2019

CLA Evidence Dashboard launched. Over 80 missions documenting CLA integration.



Post-2020



- Continuing work to institutionalize CLA with fewer resources
- Providing Organizational Development (OD) support to key Agency priorities
- Working with partner to prototype integration of racial and ethnic equity lens

Lessons:

1. **Manage change strategically:** Piloted with early adopters who helped refine and scale; used examples to stimulate demand; use demand to secure buy-in and resources
2. **Resources are essential for scaling:** time, funding, staff – support contract
3. **Integration vs. proliferation:** Embedded within the Program Cycle rather than establishing a parallel effort
4. **Best of both:** standard process (framework + maturity tool) → customized result
5. **Holistic approach** that addresses enabling conditions/org development
6. **Continuously cultivate leadership support**
7. Built the **evidence base** to answer questions about effectiveness and results
8. **Psychological safety** to voice the unspoken candidly is powerfully attractive
9. **Connect to what people care most about:** CLA “works” because it connects to people’s passion for doing better development

— Thank you!

Resource Links

- [CLA Framework](#)
- [USAID Learning Lab](#)
- [CLA Toolkit](#)
- [CLA Evidence Dashboard](#)
- [CLA Case Database](#)
- [Leaders in Learning Podcast](#)

Tools and Resources

LEARNING LAB

PROGRAMNET

 **CLA**
TOOLKIT

CLA Training
Visit USAID University

CLA Community of Practice
Sign Up on ProgramNet

CLA Maturity Tool (Self-Assessment and Action Planning)



KEY CONCEPTS

 **ADAPTING Adaptive Management**

1. Analyze learning from implementation and/or P&R opportunities.
2. Inform decision-making.
3. Follow through on decisions reached to manage adaptively.

CLA IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

NOT YET PRESENT

EMERGENT

EXPANDING

ADVANCED

INSTITUTIONALIZED

Podcasts, Videos and Blogs



LEADERS IN
LEARNING

A New Podcast Series!



What is the Relationship Between Organizational Culture and Learning?

JUN 26, 2018 by PIERS BOCKOCK, STACEY YOUNG [Comments \(1\)](#)



The focus of this episode, our fourth in our [Leaders in Learning](#) series, focuses in on something we've touched on in previous episodes, particularly episode 2: what aspects of an organization's culture contribute to its learning capacity?

In this episode, as with previous ones, we'll hear clips from three of the ten thought-leaders that we interviewed for this series. They are:

- **Chris Collison**, a world-renowned independent consultant (Chris also features in episode 5)
- **Clive Martlew**, Lead for Leadership and Learning at the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) (Clive also features in episode 6)
- **Rob Cartridge**, Head of Global Knowledge at Practical Action (Rob also features in episode 5)

Intentionally Creating and Maintaining the LEARN Culture: "Walking the CLA Talk" Part 1 of 6

JUN 23, 2017 by PIERS BOCKOCK [Comments \(8\)](#)



The blog post is part of a USAID Learning Lab series called [Working Smarter: Everyday CLA techniques to help you be more productive](#). The goal of the series is to share practical ways to integrate collaborating, learning, and adapting into your work.

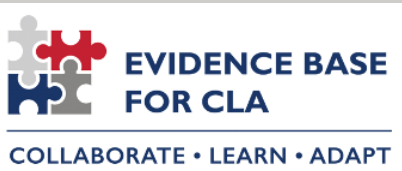
Piers Bockock is Chief of Party of the USAID LEARN contract.

As promised in my [blog from earlier this month](#), this is the first installment of a 6-part series in which I share my personal observations and application of USAID's Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) Framework over the first two years of leading USAID's Knowledge Management and Learning (LEARN) contract. For this first installment, we're starting with the "Enabling Conditions" side of the graphic, with a focus on creating and maintaining a team culture that supports all of our work, as it relates to the "Culture" component of the CLA Framework.

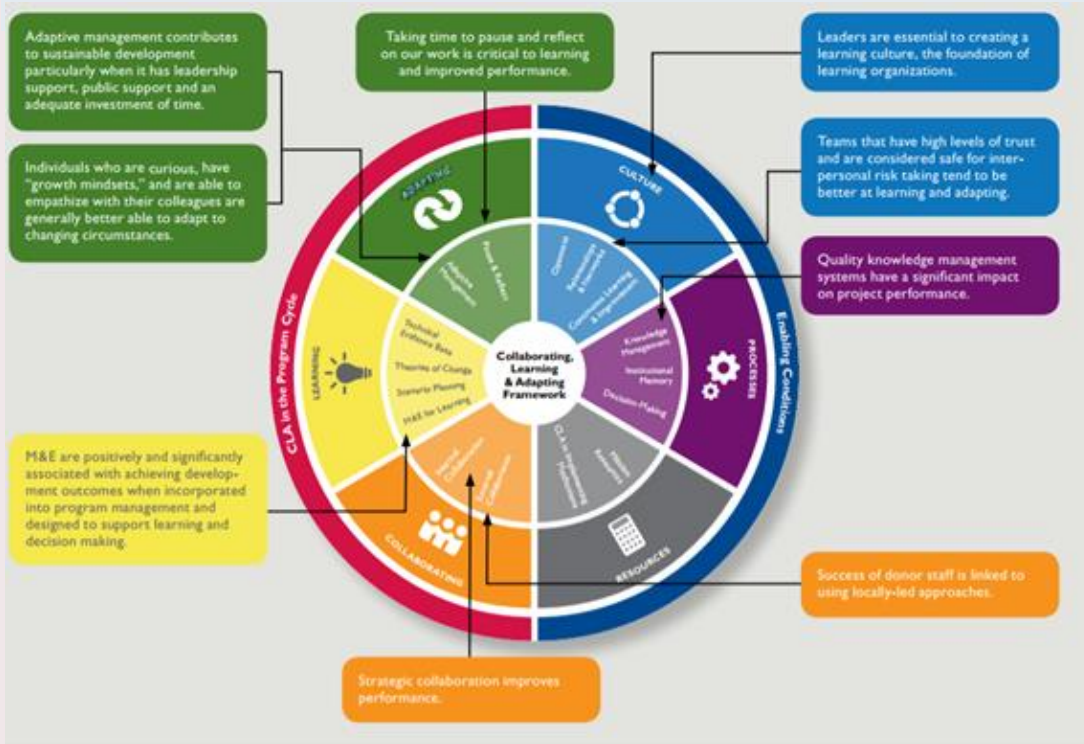
On a crisp January morning two years ago, a newly formed team of ten individuals gathered around a 30-foot faux wood conference table. Most were meeting each other for the first time, making the usual development credentials small-talk—which development firms they'd done time with, how many countries they'd been to, who knew who within the Agency they'd now be serving. A pair who had worked together previously were



Building the Evidence Base



CLA EVIDENCE DASHBOARD



CLA in the Program Cycle



Collaborating

Internal Collaboration

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External Collaboration

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Learning

Technical Evidence Base

1. Track the technical evidence base.
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Theories of Change

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1. Identify risks and opportunities through scenario planning.
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M&E for Learning

1. Relevance of monitoring data to decision-making.
2. Design and conduct evaluations to inform ongoing and future programming.
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Adapting

Pause & Reflect

1. Variety and purpose of pause & reflect opportunities.
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3. Quality of pause & reflect opportunities.

Adaptive Management

1. Analyze learning from implementation and/or pause & reflect opportunities.
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Enabling Conditions



Culture

Openness

1. Sense of comfort in sharing opinions and ideas.
2. Openness to hearing alternative perspectives.
3. Willingness to take action on new ideas.

Relationships & Networks

1. Development of trusting relationships.
2. Exchange of up-to-date information.
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Continuous Learning & Improvement

1. Staff take time for learning and reflection.
2. Motivation for learning.
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Processes

Knowledge Management

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

Institutional Memory

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

Decision-Making

1. Awareness of decision-making processes.
2. Autonomy to make decisions.
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Resources

Mission Resources

1. Roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis CIA.
2. Professional development in CIA.
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CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

1. Mechanism type and scope enables CIA.
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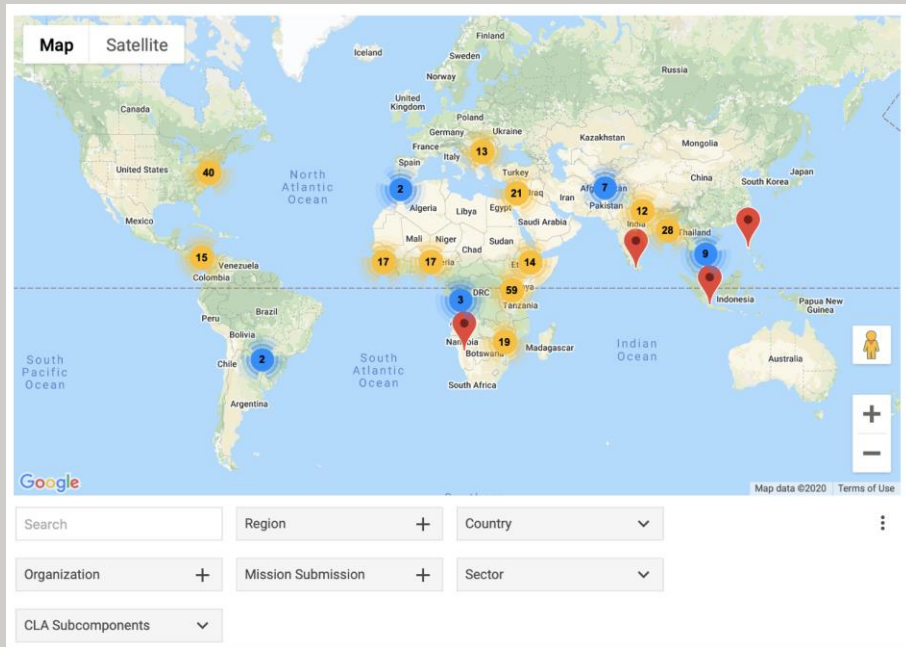


BETTER DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

+ ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



Advocacy and Thought Leadership



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CLA Component

COLLABORATING

LEARNING

ADAPTING

CULTURE

PROCESSES

RESOURCES

Blog

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LOOK BACK 25 YEARS

moving the needle 2016

MANAGING ADAPTIVELY THROUGH Collaborating, Learning and Adapting

THE KM COOKBOOK

Stories and strategies for organizations exploring Knowledge Management Standard ISO30401

CHRIS J. COLLISON | PAUL J. CORNEY | PATRICIA LEE LING

tp

CLA CASE COMPETITION

COLLABORATE • LEARN • ADAPT