ADAPTIVE LEARNING GUIDE

A pathway to stronger collaboration, learning, and adapting

MOMENTUM Knowledge Accelerator

Cover photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ADAPT   Analysis Driven Agile Programming Techniques

ADS   Automated Directives Systems

CAM   Complexity Aware Monitoring

CLA   Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting

ECAP   Ebola Community Action Platform

FEVS   Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

FP   Family Planning

GLAM   Global Learning for Adaptive Management

HSS   Health Systems Strengthening

IHI   Institute for Healthcare Improvement

KM   Knowledge Management

M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation

MECAT   MEASURE Evaluation Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit

MEL   Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

MIS   Management Information Systems

MNCH/FP/RH   Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health, Voluntary Family Planning, and Reproductive Health

MOMENTUM   Moving Integrated, Quality Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health Services, Voluntary Family Planning, and Reproductive Health Care (MNCH/FP/RH) to Scale

MSH   Management Sciences for Health

OAM   Opportunity, Ability, and Motivation

PDIA   Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation

QI   Quality Improvement

RAIN   Revitalizing Agriculture Incomes and New Markets

RCA   Root Cause Analysis

RF MERL   Rapid Feedback Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning

RH   Reproductive Health

RHITES-E   Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services in Eastern Uganda

SCS   South and Central Syria

SMART   Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic (and Relevant), and Time-Bound

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

WHO   World Health Organization

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adaptive Learning The intentional adoption of strategies and actions to facilitate critical reflection and analysis of data, information, and knowledge—on a continuous basis and from a wide range of sources—to inform decisions that optimize program implementation and effectiveness in expected, unexpected, and changing circumstances.

Adaptive Management An intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context.[1]

Award A single project within the MOMENTUM suite (i.e., Integrated Health Resilience, Country and Global Leadership, Private Healthcare Delivery, Knowledge Accelerator, Safe Surgery in Family Planning and Obstetrics, Strengthening Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity).

Competency The combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable the execution of complex tasks, which in this guide refers to those that enhance the application of adaptive learning.

Complexity-Aware Monitoring A type of complementary monitoring that is useful when results are difficult to predict due to dynamic contexts or unclear cause-and-effect relationships.[2]

Continuous Improvement Ongoing effort to enhance the quality and outcomes of a process through an iterative, learning approach. This includes quality improvement and other improvement methodologies.

Design The process by which a team defines how it will operationalize the discrete development result or set of results.

Implementation An ongoing process in which team members work collaboratively to ensure that activities taken together are achieving the intended development outcome(s).

Improvement An intentional process in which team members make iterative adjustments to project design or implementation in response to new information and changes in context.

MOMENTUM: Moving Integrated, Quality MNCH/FP/RH to Scale is the flagship, multi-award program at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to accelerate reductions in maternal, newborn, and child mortality and morbidity in high-burden USAID partner countries.

Organizational Culture Values, philosophy, mission, norms, behaviors, or "rules of the road" accepted by the organization and its members as normal.[3]

Organizational Environment Internal and external factors, including management structure, organizational culture, and local and national policies and context, that influence an organization's activities and decisions.[4]

Process The systematic and intentional steps to achieve a desired result, which in this guide refers to integrating adaptive learning into project design, implementation, and improvement.

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[1] USAID. *Program Cycle Discussion Note: Adaptive Management.* Version I / January 2018. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/dn_-_adaptive_management.pdf.

[2] USAID. *Program Cycle Discussion Note: Complexity-Aware Monitoring.* Version I / July 2018. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cleared_dn_complexity-aware_monitoring.pdf.

[3] USAID Learning Lab. CLA Toolkit: Enhancing Organizational Culture for CLA. https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/enhancing-organizational-culture-cla.

[4] Sharfman, Mark P., and James W. Dean. 1991. "Conceptualizing and Measuring the Organizational Environment: A Multidimensional Approach." *Journal of Management* 17 (4): 681-700. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700403.

Project A set of complementary activities, over an established timeline and budget, intended to achieve a discrete development result; also used to describe an individual award within the MOMENTUM suite.

Quality Improvement Methodology for introducing changes in service delivery processes and systems in ways that enable high-impact, evidence-based interventions to achieve better results.[5]

Team The members of the organization tasked with designing, implementing, and improving projects or program activities.

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[5] University Research Co., LLC. Quality Improvement. 2019. https://www.urc-chs.com/quality-improvement.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

MOMENTUM—or Moving Integrated, Quality Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health Services, Voluntary Family Planning, and Reproductive Health Care (MNCH/FP/RH) to Scale—is the flagship, multi-award program at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to accelerate reductions in maternal, newborn, and child mortality and morbidity in high-burden USAID partner countries. The purpose of this Adaptive Learning Guide is to provide MOMENTUM project teams with the information and resources to integrate adaptive learning into the design, implementation, and improvement of MNCH/FP/RH programs**.**

This guide provides a conceptual introduction to adaptive learning using links to existing resources and real-world examples of how adaptive learning can drive continuous learning and improvement in project work. The guide is built upon three foundational assumptions:

- We work in dynamic, often unpredictable environments.
- Unexpected turns of events will occur.
- Progress is rarely, if ever, linear.

Integrating the principles and practices of [USAID's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Toolkit](#) into projects and initiatives requires designing for learning and adaptation. We intend the guide to serve as a "starting point" for interested individuals and teams to begin or strengthen the processes that support the integration of adaptive learning into project work.

The intended audiences of this guide are MOMENTUM implementers (including global, country, field awardees, and subawardees) and their counterparts at USAID (collectively "MOMENTUM partners"). Specifically, this guide is intended for project leadership; project or activity managers; and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) technical staff. While we developed the guide with those particular users in mind, the information and resources it contains will be relevant and useful to any individual or team looking to build their capacities for learning and adaptation, within as well as outside the MOMENTUM suite of awards.

The Adaptive Learning Guide is a living document that embodies its own principles by learning from MOMENTUM suite feedback and new external knowledge. Based on feedback received from the Guide's users, new units will be created and existing ones enhanced. These new and/or enhanced units will be disseminated and uptake of the resources and tools linked within this guide will be supported.

UNIT 1: HOW TO USE THE ADAPTIVE LEARNING GUIDE

HOW TO GET STARTED

The Adaptive Learning Guide is divided into three sections. **Units 1-2**, "Understand," provide instructions on the format and use of this guide and a conceptual introduction to adaptive learning and its value in improving development work. **Units 3-5**, "Get Ready," provide guidance and resources to assess your current capacity to use adaptive learning and contain process instructions for developing an environment and team conducive to learning and adaptation. **Units 6-9**, "Get Started," provide guidance and resources to implement a set of processes to integrate adaptive learning into project design, implementation, and improvement.

FIGURE 1.1: ADAPTIVE LEARNING GUIDE STRUCTURE
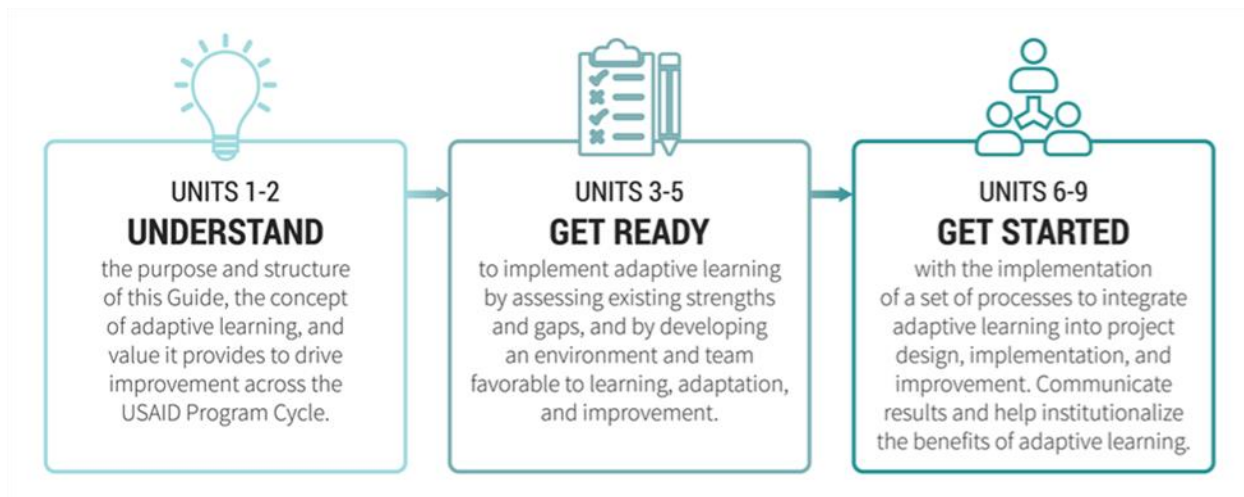
We recommend that, after reviewing the conceptual introduction in **Unit 2**, you begin with **Unit 3**, "Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning." Unit 3 draws from existing project monitoring and evaluation practices and other measurement tools to help you identify both strengths and areas where work is needed to integrate adaptive learning into your project work. This **assessment of readiness** is critical for navigating the other units in this guide. **Units 4-9** each cover a single process necessary to prepare for and initially integrate or strengthen the use of adaptive learning into project design, implementation, and improvement. Each unit can be used individually, so you can choose which units address your project's needs based on the results of the readiness assessment from Unit 3. Additionally, each unit begins with instructions for assessing existing capacities related to that process if you already know where gaps exist without having reviewed the guidance and utilized the tools in Unit 3.

BOX 1.1: DEFINITION

Process	The systematic and intentional steps to achieve a desired result, which in this guide refers to integrating adaptive learning into project design, implementation, and improvement.

ESSENTIAL PROCESSES TO ADAPTIVE LEARNING

The Adaptive Learning Guide includes six functional units, each focusing on a process that is essential to the integration of adaptive learning into your project team's work. We selected these processes based on a review of the current and existing literature, synthesis of key practices and resources from USAID's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Toolkit, and expert key informants, including USAID technical staff and MOMENTUM awardees. Figure 1.2 illustrates how these six processes interact directly with one another and together enable you to integrate adaptive learning into your work.

FIGURE 1.2: SIX PROCESSES ENABLE TEAMS TO INTEGRATE ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO THEIR PROJECTS
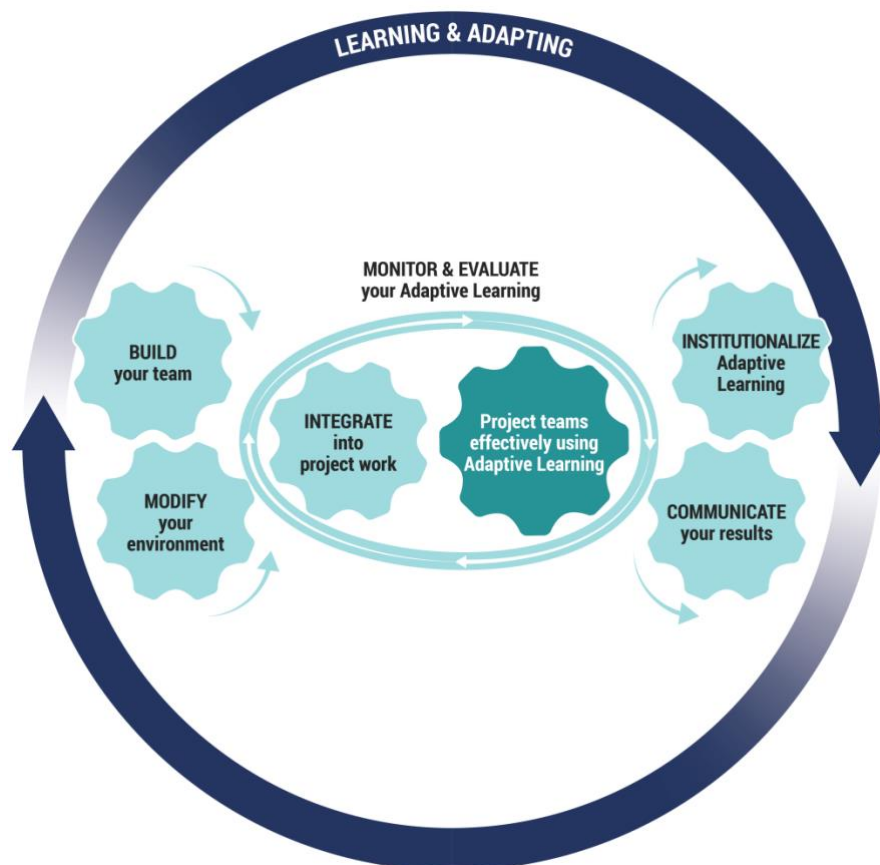
Unit 3 supports you in assessing your readiness to integrate adaptive learning into your work so that it is clearer **where** to get started. Each particular unit begins by providing detailed instructions, resources, tools, and guidance on **how** to start or strengthen that process. Units provide case studies to describe how other organizations and projects have assessed, started, or strengthened the specific process or competency and the related outcomes. We intend these real-world examples to encourage learning from others' practical, real-world knowledge, successes, and challenges.

HOW THE GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED

To develop this guide, we performed a landscape analysis of existing research on and resources for adaptive learning and similar concepts. Much of this research and resources have been integrated directly into the units and are listed within the "Useful Resources" tables at the end of each unit. We also explored related methods that adaptive learning is designed to support, such as adaptive management, quality improvement, and complexity-aware monitoring. Following that analysis, we interviewed a series of key informants, who provided insight into the essential elements needed for implementing or strengthening adaptive learning processes as well as the structure and focus of the guide.

Our work identified the need for a resource that builds on and includes links to existing resources while using real-world examples to illustrate processes, challenges, and successes. As a result, we built on available and relevant case studies from resources such as the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Case Studies database and ADAPTing Aid: Lessons from Six Case Studies. We will periodically update these case studies to capture new insights from the COVID-19 pandemic and other work implemented through the MOMENTUM suite of awards and other sources.

UNIT 2: UNDERSTANDING ADAPTIVE LEARNING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define adaptive learning.
- Describe how adaptive learning accelerates improved performance and project outcomes.
- Describe where adaptive learning fits within the MOMENTUM suite of awards.

WHAT IS ADAPTIVE LEARNING?

Successful health and development efforts require more than just adopting best practices. Rising to the inherent challenges of the complex environments in which public health systems operate requires learning from previous successes and setbacks, responding to emerging evidence and real-time changes in context, and adapting projects in response to the incoming information from ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).

Increasingly, projects are using strategies such as adaptive management, complexity-aware monitoring, quality improvement methodologies, and other continuous improvement strategies to provide guidelines and steps for these adaptations. Even so, these steps either often encounter resistance or never occur. What may be missing are the processes that enable project teams to more effectively incorporate these approaches and develop cultures of learning. Adaptive learning addresses these needs by providing individuals and teams with the right knowledge and skills and by supporting the creation of an enabling environment.

Adaptive learning is not new, and one clear, consensus definition of "adaptive learning" does not exist in the development literature. Concepts such as iteration, feedback, course correction, and complexity all have important ties to adaptive learning and are useful approaches for implementing collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) practices. More systematic approaches to understand adaptations and create generalizable knowledge include implementation research and rigorous program evaluation (see Box 2.4 for definitions). For help deciding when to introduce more systematic research, recommended resources are provided in the table at the end of this unit.

Over the last 20 years, USAID's strategic response to the need for projects to learn and adapt became codified in the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Framework. CLA merges tools, approaches, and critical programming components that together promote effective programming. CLA defines "learning" as an intentional process of generating, capturing, sharing, and analyzing information and knowledge from a wide range of sources to inform decisions and adapt programs to be more effective.[6] "Adapting" is defined as the process of using information gathered through collaboration and learning activities to make better decisions and adjustments as necessary.[7] By integrating these two concepts, a definition of adaptive learning emerges (see Box 2.1).

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[6]   USAID Learning Lab. Learning. https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-component/learning.

[7]   USAID Learning Lab. CLA Toolkit: Understanding CLA. https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/understanding-cla-0.

BOX 1.1 DEFINITION

Adaptive Learning	The intentional adoption of strategies and actions to facilitate critical reflection and analysis of data, information, and knowledge—on a continuous basis and from a wide range of sources—to inform decisions that optimize program implementation and effectiveness in expected, unexpected, and changing circumstances.

Adaptive learning requires a combination of the following:

- MOMENTUM projects structured to allow for learning and adaptation, including how core operations function, such as scheduling, resource utilization, and leadership engagement.
- Team member mindsets and the organizational environment supportive of continuous learning and adaptation through the use of new and/or changing information to guide decision-making.
- Timely and accurate access to the right data, information, and knowledge collected in the right way, by the right people.
- Reliable mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability to all stakeholders.

Simply put, adaptive learning helps project teams better understand the context in which they are working, ongoing changes to that context, how that context interacts with or affects project implementation, and how to respond effectively (see Box 2.2)

BOX 2.2: CASE STUDY

Addressing Gaps in Organizational Culture

Results for Development, Testing Approaches to Promote Family-Based Care in Cambodia

Rapid Feedback Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (RF MERL) is an adaptive learning strategy that integrates monitoring and evaluation approaches into program design and early implementation. In this strategy, an RF MERL team works with partners—including program designers and implementers—to review a program's theory of change and identify which aspects rely on untested assumptions or adaptations. The team then works together to design activities using monitoring, evaluation, and analytic techniques that test those aspects of the theory of change. The specific activities, data collection tools, and analytic strategies differ between projects and are determined and designed based on the questions the team aims to answer. By designing systematic feedback loops focused on these areas, challenges can be surfaced early in implementation, allowing project teams to adapt their approaches based on these learnings. In addition to providing assurance that assumptions are correct and opportunity for adjustments if not, the RF MERL strategy can also provide opportunities for greater cost-effectiveness.

The RF MERL approach has been piloted by a consortium of organizations led by Results for Development. One of these pilots was implemented in Cambodia in 2017 and 2018. The RF MERL consortium conducted a rapid feedback experiment on the Family Care First Cambodia campaign. This campaign aimed to raise awareness about the harms of residential care institutions and the

benefits of family-based care for children in Cambodia. In partnership with the RF MERL team, the assessment was designed to evaluate if a formal messaging campaign in addition to social work was more effective than social work alone to change knowledge and attitudes regarding residential care. Rapid feedback on this element of the program helped the team better understand behavior change in their target population. By testing this assumption before implementation, the program teams could weigh cost-effectiveness against the impact of their planned activities on knowledge and attitudes and adapt the program accordingly to optimize impact and resources.

Key Lessons

- Monitoring and evaluation activities are often used too late in a project cycle to impact adaptive learning and program design. These activities can serve as beneficial adaptive learning tools when applied early in implementation.

- Many programs rely on assumptions that may not hold up in differing contexts. Monitoring and evaluation activities can be a valuable adaptive learning tool to assess and test these assumptions and adapt as needed before scaling.

- Using rapid feedback monitoring and evaluation activities to test elements of a theory of change can enable implementers to make informed choices about program resources.

WHY IS ADAPTIVE LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Global health projects are essentially experiments based on a theory of change with a set of assumptions that rely on available evidence, prior experience, and current context. However, development programming differs from traditional research design in that these variables cannot be kept constant through the life of a project. Without a guarantee of success as projects are originally designed, teams must learn and adapt throughout the project life cycle. Change is therefore fundamental to project success and should be both expected and encouraged. Adaptive learning can borrow from methods that support adaptation into pragmatic research (e.g., implementation research, applied research, and development research; see definitions in Box 2.4) that are designed to better understand and improve implementation. Implementers should identify when the rigor of implementation research or these other methodologies are most appropriate to incorporate or strengthen the use of adaptive learning by discussing the opportunities to generate new evidence that can guide project design, implementation, and improvement (see case study in Box 2.3). USAID has developed the TIPs on Implementation Research for Decision Makers in Low- and Middle-Income Countries to help implementers identify when implementation research should be considered.

BOX 2.3: CASE STUDY

Understanding How Implementation Research Incorporates and Can Strengthen Adaptive Learning

Hodgins, Stephen et al. 2019. "Achieving and Sustaining Impact at Scale for a Newborn Intervention in Nepal: A Mixed-Methods Study." Journal of Global Health Reports 3. https://doi.org/10.29392/joghr.3.e2019046.

In the late 2000s, Nepal was faced with high infection–attributable neonatal mortality. Locally generated evidence had found that the use of the antiseptic chlorhexidine for newborn cord care reduced the risk of such deaths. The government wanted to scale up to national coverage, but there were no evidence-supported pathways for managing such scale-up.

Mixed methods implementation research was used to translate data from narrative accounts, household surveys, health management information system (HMIS) data, and other sources to identify factors contributing to successful scale-up. From a pilot in four districts in 2009, chlorhexidine for cord care was found to be in stock in 85% of public hospitals and by 2017 was applied to about 70% of newborns (90% for facility-born and 40% for those born at home). However, coverage rates were lower among more vulnerable communities.

Implementation research helped to identify strategies that facilitated scale-up. For example, a small, quasi-experimental user-preference study showed that gel was preferred to liquid chlorhexidine. New knowledge using implementation research helped drive adaptive learning and more effective program scale-up approaches. For example, evidence supported integrating the distribution of chlorhexidine with antenatal care. Evidence also supported the importance of ensuring a champion with leadership authority at the national level who emphasizes communicating results of program learning, adaptation, and progress to encourage the buy-in and support of key stakeholders.

Key Lessons

- Implementation research was important to measure key implementation outcomes, including reach, feasibility, and acceptability, with enough rigor to inform policy.
- Implementation research also helped identify effective scale-up strategies as well as a gap in service delivery equity, which requires ongoing adaptive learning and implementation of work to address.

By integrating adaptive learning into how projects are designed and implemented, you enhance the abilities of your project teams to effectively adapt to new and changing circumstances and insights. Ultimately, by increasing a team's ability to learn, and to learn how to adapt successfully to new information and changes in the environment, adaptive learning contributes to improving a project's effectiveness, acceptability, scalability, and sustainability. Teams that work actively to collect and integrate new information into project work are able to react and adapt faster, which accelerates project outcomes.

When project teams do not integrate adaptive learning into their work, opportunities to improve design and implementation of interventions are lost and outcomes suffer. For example, in the BetterBirth Trial, a randomized study of the implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO) Safe Childbirth Checklist in India, the coaching of birth attendants and managers produced greater adherence to essential birth practices, representing significant improvements in care for women and newborns. However, the program failed to reduce neonatal and maternal morbidity and mortality. Only after the study period was the lack of impact on death rates attributed to persistent gaps in skills, supplies, or systems for care of complications.[8]

All MOMENTUM stakeholders should recognize that the original project design is based on assumptions made prior to project implementation and that changes based on learning and adaptation approaches will result in better development outcomes and enhanced local capacity for long-term and sustained improvements. Learning and adaptation at every step will improve MOMENTUM implementation, which leads to more effective projects and accelerates progress in scaled-up and sustained access to and equitable use of evidence-based, quality MNCH/FP/RH information, services/care, and interventions in public and private health sectors, leading ultimately to reduced morbidity and mortality among women and children.

WHERE DOES ADAPTIVE LEARNING FIT IN THE USAID PROGRAM CYCLE?

Adaptive learning is not just a way of thinking: it requires coordinated action at multiple levels. For instance, project implementation and MEL activities must be timed and structured in a way that guides project actions; policies, procedures, and systems must enable quick and efficient programmatic changes; teams must embrace continuous learning; organizational leaders must create structures that encourage project adaptation; and internal communication activities must be prepared to rapidly and effectively communicate to appropriate stakeholders.

USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) 201 guidance describes the Program Cycle, or the agency's operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming. Adaptive learning works across every phase of this cycle to harness information and generate insight into what is or is not working and why (see Figure 2.1). In using adaptive learning, MOMENTUM projects and implementing organizations can more rapidly incorporate insights and new evidence using methods such as adaptive management, quality improvement, and complexity-aware monitoring. For USAID, some forms of research or evaluations may overlap with or contribute to adaptive learning, especially implementation research, applied research, and development research (see Box 2.4 for definitions).

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8   Semrau, Katherine E. A. et al. 2017. "Outcomes of Implementing a Coaching-Based WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist Program in India." *New England Journal of Medicine* 377 (24): 2313-24 https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1701075.

FIGURE 2.1: CONNECTING ADAPTIVE LEARNING TO THE USAID PROGRAM CYCLE
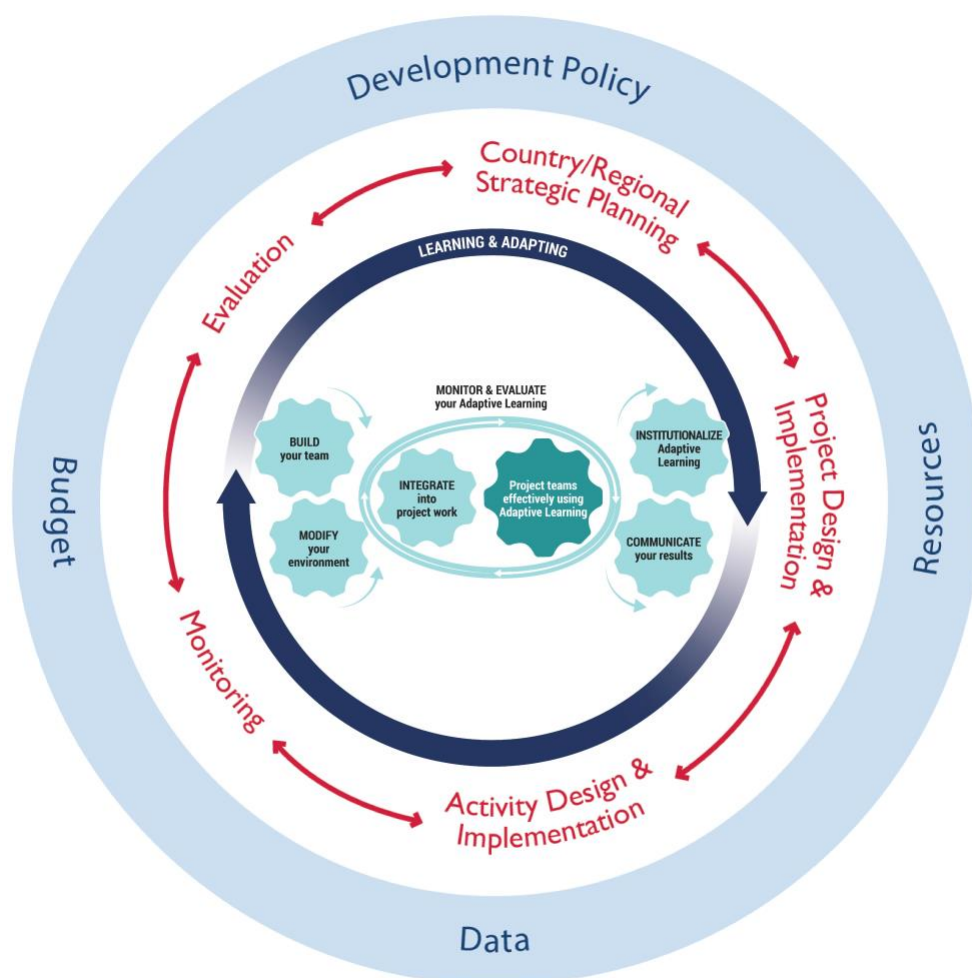
BOX 2.4: DEFINITIONS

Adaptive Management	An intentional **approach** to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context.[9]
Complexity-Aware Monitoring	A type of complementary **monitoring** that is useful when results are difficult to predict due to dynamic contexts or unclear cause-and-effect relationships.[10]
Quality Improvement	A **methodology** for introducing changes in health service delivery processes and systems in ways that enable high-impact, evidence-based interventions to achieve better results.[11]

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[9]   USAID. *Program Cycle Discussion Note: Adaptive Management.*

[10]   USAID. *Program Cycle Discussion Note: Complexity-Aware Monitoring.*

[11]   University Research Co., LLC. Quality Improvement. 2019. https://www.urc-chs.com/quality-improvement.

Implementation Research	A systematic approach using methodologies and frameworks to better understand or implement strategies to integrate evidence-based interventions into real-world settings to improve patient outcomes and create generalizable knowledge. Implementation research can also focus on understanding contextual factors that can hinder or facilitate achieving implementation outcomes, including but not limited to effectiveness.
Applied Research[12]	Systematic study to gain knowledge or understanding necessary to determine how a recognized and specific need may be met. Applied research is undertaken either to determine possible uses for the findings of basic research or to determine new methods or ways of achieving your objectives.
Development Research[12]	Systematic application of knowledge or understanding, directed toward the production of useful materials, devices, and systems or methods, including design, development, and improvement of prototypes and new processes to meet specific requirements.

Quality improvement is often associated with specific clinical or service delivery intervention(s) and can be used with adaptive management and complexity-aware monitoring. These concepts are similar in many ways as they each focus on improving the collection and utilization of information to enhance project effectiveness. Since most of USAID's work takes place in complicated and transitioning systems, complexity-aware monitoring approaches are fundamental to providing teams with strategies to measure and respond to changes or unexpected information in their project and context. Adaptive management entails utilizing this complex and changing information to effectively make adjustments to project implementation while maintaining focus and progress toward goals.

Adaptive learning supports the operationalization of complexity-aware monitoring and adaptive management by creating the culture, institutional support, and practices needed for project staff to be ready to use new information and effectively adapt projects to changes. These practices include building a team that embraces a culture of learning, has the knowledge and skills to make changes to their work as new information arises, and has the support of leadership to communicate openly when their context changes and problems arise.

We are integrating adaptive learning into the MOMENTUM suite of awards by implementing a MOMENTUM learning agenda. Individual awards are also developing their own learning agendas; MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership (MCGL), for instance, has identified six critical CLA competencies and mapped where they intend to use adaptive learning processes. By regularly pausing, reflecting, and reviewing assumptions and approaches through answering a series of learning questions, we will gain a better understanding of the role contextual factors played in decisions to shift and adapt and what those shifts were. This will inform ways MOMENTUM projects should adapt moving forward, explain MOMENTUM's impact, and contribute to the global knowledge base.

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[12] USAID. *Research Defined*. 2017.
       https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/research_defined_factsheet.pdf.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING ADAPTIVE LEARNING AND HOW IT FUNCTIONS TO ACCELERATE PROJECT OUTCOMES

Resource	Description	Relevance	Link
USAID Program Cycle	The Program Cycle is USAID's operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming.	The Program Cycle provides a framework for **where** adaptive learning should be integrated.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/program-cycle-overview-page https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201
USAID Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Framework and Toolkit	The CLA is USAID's approach to organizational learning and adaptive management in the Program Cycle.	USAID CLA Toolkit provides case studies, tools, and other resources for implementing **what** project improvement practices are enabled by adaptive learning.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-toolkit
Discussion Note: Adaptive Management	The Discussion Note provides guidance on emerging and promising practices in implementing adaptive management.	The Discussion Note provides guidance for **how** to implement adaptive management approaches.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/discussion-note-adaptive-management
Discussion Note: Complexity-Aware Monitoring	The Discussion Note provides guidance on emerging and promising practices in implementing adaptive management.	The Discussion Note provides an explanation of **when** to use complexity-aware monitoring and summarizes core principles.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cleared_dn_complexity-aware_monitoring.pdf
A Guide to Complexity -Aware Monitoring (CAM) Approaches for MOMENTUM Projects	The technical guide introduces the principles and practices of CAM.	The technical guide provides guidance for **how** to implement CAM approaches.	https://km.usaidmomentum.org/system/files/2020-11/CAM%20Guide%20Final%202020_11_20.pdf
Analysis Driven Agile Programming Techniques (ADAPTing Aid): Lessons from Six Case Studies	A collaboration between the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Mercy Corps to research, innovate, and field test adaptive management techniques for the sector.	Through six case studies, this resource examines **what** adaptive management looks likes in practice, **what** impact it can have, and **how** it can best be nurtured.	https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/adaptive-management-case-studies

Building a Global Learning Alliance on Adaptive Management	Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) is developing, testing, and scaling new and adapted MEL approaches that can help to underpin effective adaptive interventions.	GLAM is a resource for identifying **which** tools, skills, practices, relationships, and incentives best harness the potential of MEL for adaptive decision-making.	https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12327.pdf
USAID Scientific Research Policy	The Scientific Research Policy is written for USAID staff and implementing partners to consolidate operational policies of particular relevance to the design and management of research activities.	This resource provides tools and templates to help implement the USAID Research Policy when a more systematic approach is needed to study adaptation.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/usaid-scientific-research-policy
USAID Evaluation Policy	Provide clear policy guidance about the purposes of evaluation, the types of evaluations that are required and recommended, and the approach for conducting, disseminating, and using evaluations.	The policy supports planning and decision-making regarding the practice of evaluation within projects managed by USAID. It also serves to communicate to implementing partners and key stakeholders USAID's approach to evaluation.	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf
TIPs on Implementation Research for Decision Makers in Low- and Middle-Income Countries	TIPs are 2-4 page briefs laying out the most important concepts for planning and conducting implementation research.	The TIPs contained in this series guide health decisionmakers to use implementation research approaches to inform decision-making, program management, service delivery, and scaling-up health interventions.	https://www.harpnet.org/tips-on-implementation-research/

UNIT 3: ASSESSING STRENGTHS AND GAPS FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Know how to conduct an assessment using existing tools and resources to understand your project's readiness to integrate or expand adaptive learning into design, implementation, and improvement.
- Know how to identify strengths that can be leveraged to integrate adaptive learning into your project.
- Be able to identify gaps that need to be addressed and how to utilize this guide to effectively integrate adaptive learning into your project.

UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE FOR STARTING WITH A READINESS ASSESSMENT

Whether you are new to adaptive learning or attempting to strengthen existing policies and practices in your MOMENTUM project, the first step is to review what resources are available to support implementation of adaptive processes.[13] This initial readiness assessment will identify strengths on which you can build, identify opportunities for you to strategically invest resources, and guide your development of a detailed, actionable plan to carry out adaptive learning. This unit provides a sample of low- and high-intensity assessment tools so you can select an approach most suitable for your available resources and needs. These tools will help prioritize efforts in building and strengthening processes for adaptive learning within MOMENTUM. Other tools can help you to decide if you need to conduct a more systematic evaluation or research to understand your gaps and potential solutions. USAID's TIPs on Implementation Research for Decision Makers in Low- and Middle-Income Countries is one such tool to help you determine if implementation research is appropriate and, if so, how to select and plan your study.

PLAN, CONDUCT, AND MAKE USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STEP 1: ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS AND BUILD AN ASSESSMENT TEAM

A successful assessment is participatory, transparent, feasible, and produces actionable knowledge to guide next steps. First, engage all MOMENTUM staff affected by the assessment to build trust in the process, early buy-in for the goals of the assessment and results, and willingness to engage in the next steps. To ensure you reach all relevant individuals, map internal and external stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved with or impacted by project activities and outcomes. Make certain that all these stakeholders understand the goals of the assessment and have an open mind about adaptive learning.

An inclusive assessment team will help ensure an appropriate representation of perspectives, expertise, and experience, which will contribute to a high-quality process and end product. It is important you include representation (as relevant) across gender, job functions, seniority/tenure, language, roles/responsibilities, and office location. Make sure to include the people whose job responsibilities include adaptive learning,

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[13]   USAID. The Journey to Self-Reliance. 2020. https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance.

adaptive management, or monitoring, evaluation, and learning. The specific assessment tool you select will provide you with more detailed guidance on who should be part of the assessment team. Provide the space and environment needed to encourage everyone to contribute honestly and openly to the discussion. Make it clear throughout the process that the assessment is about opportunities for improvement rather than criticism and assigning blame.

STEP 2: SELECT THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT TOOL

Although there are currently no assessment tools designed explicitly for adaptive learning, many existing tools measure relevant processes. We identified three high-value assessment tools for this purpose. The guidance in Table 3.1 will help you choose among them. The degree to which each of the selected tools addresses the identified factors and abilities essential to integrate adaptive learning is shown in the table, with "+++" indicating multiple direct measures, "++" indicating only one or two measures, and "+" indicating the need to modify or supplement the assessment tool to address factor or ability.

You may choose a lower- or higher-intensity assessment tool, depending on your organizational and project resources (e.g., time, staff, training capacity), your experience conducting internal assessments, and your needs:

- The most flexible and least resource-intensive assessment tool is the ADAPT Adaptive Management Self-Assessment Tool. It uses a series of survey questions to evaluate five domains for adaptive management. Though initially developed for the project level, this assessment is adaptable and can be applied to facility, subaward, or country level, for example. It can utilize a variety of assessment formats ranging from electronic surveys to facilitated group discussions. Time required for completion varies depending on the format selected, but it should take no more than 2.5 hours, even with the group workshop option. It covers most of the essential factors and abilities in adequate detail; however, some organizations may require a more detailed assessment than a survey instrument can offer.

- A middle option is the CLA Maturity Spectrum, which provides a series of prompts to explore the degree to which an organization is practicing each of the 16 subcomponents in the CLA framework on a continuum of "not present" to "institutionalized." The tool is recommended to be used in groups of five to six, and the tool takes between one and three hours to complete. It is structured to reflect the CLA framework (Culture, Processes, Resources, Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting), which may be familiar to participants. USAID has provided a small suite of resources to support the working group members and facilitator executing the self-assessment.

- The most in-depth and resource-intensive assessment method is the MEASURE Evaluation Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit (MECAT), which was designed for national or subnational health projects. This tool uses a combination of individual self-assessments, group assessments, qualitative interviews, and a desk review to generate a dashboard visualization. Though resource- and time-intensive, the MECAT provides a highly detailed view of an organization's capacity for adaptive learning processes. The structured portion does not explicitly address all of the processes but can be adapted to measure these areas.

TABLE 3.1: MAPPING OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES AGAINST EXISTING ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Guide Unit	Adaptive Learning Processes		Adaptive Management Self-Assessment Tool	CLA Maturity Spectrum	MECAT
Unit 4	Enabling Environment		+++	+++	+++
Unit 5	Team Culture & Mindset		+++	+++	+++
Unit 6	Project Integration	Systematic problem identification & solution testing	+++	+++	+++
		Robust knowledge & data use practices	+++	+++	+++
		Incorporation of pause/reflect moments	+++	+++	+
		Regular stakeholder engagement	+	+++	+++
		Adaptable designs	+++	++	+
Unit 7	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning of Your Adaptive Learning		+++	+	+++
Unit 8	Institutionalizing Supportive Systems, Structures, Processes		+++	+	+
Unit 9	Communication & Collaboration Channels		+	+	+++

+++ Multiple direct measures of the specific process or competency

++ 1-2 direct measures

+ No direct measures, modification, or supplementation required

Table 3.1 is not meant to be an exhaustive list of useful assessment tools. Instead, it is a curated list of assessments that are well suited for understanding your project teams' strengths and weaknesses to integrate adaptive learning. Many other specialized tools focus more deeply on specific areas relevant to adaptive learning, such as assessments of information systems, use of quality improvement and quality management projects, and team performance assessments. Consider the use of additional tools depending on the preferences and experience of your organization. In some cases, you may wish to combine multiple assessment tools or modify existing tools to suit your local context. Regardless, you should ensure that your assessment methodology accounts for the factors and abilities detailed in Table 3.1 and reflects your timeframe and resources.

STEP 3: CONDUCT THE ASSESSMENT

Conducting the assessment will depend on your project's resources, goals, and timeframe and should be directly informed by the specific implementation guidance provided by the assessment tool selected. Ideally, the team who will be incorporating or strengthening adaptive learning use should be included; this may be at project leadership level or perhaps lower. If you have people already skilled in adaptive learning, they will also be an asset. Ideally, you should also involve project leadership in the planning and execution of the

assessment, either directly in the assessment or at a minimum in supporting the assessment and in the feedback to ensure it has the appropriate authority, ownership, and support needed to make use of findings. **The assessment will help you understand which processes to strengthen in order to more successfully integrate adaptive learning into your project teams' work using units 4-9 of this guide.**

STEP 4: INTERPRET AND SHARE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Whether results are survey data or structured discussions, it will be helpful to map the information collected through the assessment to their corresponding adaptive learning processes detailed in Table 3.1. After synthesizing results, share your findings with the relevant MOMENTUM stakeholders within your project and leadership in the project and organization identified in Step 1, taking care to highlight areas of strength, challenges, and where support or resources will be needed. Working with a team specifically tasked with strengthening adaptive learning in a MOMENTUM project or activity team, focus on understanding what your assessment data reveals about the processes most relevant to integrating adaptive learning within your project or organization.

STEP 5: USE CAUSAL ANALYSIS TO UNDERSTAND FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIZE ACTIVITIES

Understanding the underlying causes of the challenges identified will make it easier to identify how best to intervene—where and how to invest resources most effectively to strengthen adaptive learning. The tools listed below (see Table 3.2) represent some structured approaches to carry out causal analysis to understand the gaps, their causes, and how to prioritize time and resources. Feasibility and resource constraints may be part of the decision-making when choosing activities to start or strengthen adaptive learning processes.

TABLE 3.2: TOOLS FOR CAUSAL ANALYSIS*

Tool	Description	Resources
TOOLS FOR ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS		
Five Whys	A very simple problem-solving method that helps identify the underlying causes of one or more challenges by asking "why" or "what caused this problem" until a problem statement has been refined to its root cause.	• Five Whys for Root Cause Analysis (RCA) Tool • 5 Whys: Finding the Root Cause*
Fishbone Diagram	A process that organizes multiple causes of a problem into categories. This tool is slightly more complex and time intensive. It can be combined with "Five Whys."	• How to Use the Fishbone Tool for Root Cause Analysis • Cause and Effect Diagram | Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)
TOOLS FOR PRIORITIZATION		
Prioritization Matrix	A tool for selecting the "best" challenge to solve first based on consistent, self-defined criteria.	Appendix B. Prioritize Opportunities for Improvement Guide to Prioritization Techniques

*IHI resources are freely available for download and use but require that users first register with the IHI website.

STEP 6: SELECT THE RELEVANT ADAPTIVE LEARNING PROCESS AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Once you have examined root causes of challenges to adaptive learning and prioritized the factors and abilities you wish to address, reference the corresponding unit in this adaptive learning guide addressing the identified factors. **Units 4-9 provide guidance on knowledge, skills, and resources to start or strengthen specific processes for integrating adaptive learning.**

Next, develop an action plan to support the transition from assessment to activity planning and execution. Developing this action plan will help ensure you identify the right resources and establish a timeline to engage with the units and plan activity implementation. USAID offers a variety of resources and templates for post-evaluation action planning. The key steps are detailed in Box 3.3 below.

In addition, MOMENTUM learning exchanges such as share fairs, peer mentoring, and the Knowledge Management (KM) platform learning exchange spaces can offer suggested actions and guidance that may be useful to support your project's adaptive learning action plan. You should carry out Steps 7 and 8 detailed below even after the initial assessment is complete and you have prioritized units. These two steps are also critical to continuous improvement work.

BOX 3.1: POST-EVALUATION GUIDANCE PLANS

ADS 201.3.5.18(A), Responding to Evaluation Findings, states:

To help ensure that institutional learning takes place and evaluation findings are used to improve development outcomes, Mission and Washington operating units must develop a post-evaluation action plan upon completion of an evaluation. The following steps must be taken to develop the post-evaluation action plan:[i]

- Review the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations systematically.

- Determine and document whether the Mission or Washington operating unit accepts/supports each conclusion or recommendation.

- Identify any management or other program actions needed based on the evaluation findings, conclusions, or recommendations. This may include changes to strategy, projects, activities, or other planning frameworks.

- Assign responsibility and the timeframe for completion of each set of actions.

- Document the expected actions based on the evaluation, responsibilities, timeframes, and completion of actions in a post-evaluation action plan.

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[i]   USAID. *Evaluation Resource: Post-Evaluation Action Plans: Guidance and Templates.* Aug. 2017. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/post-evaluation_action_plans_-_august_2017.pdf.

STEP 7: IMPLEMENT MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF YOUR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Implement your plan to address the prioritized processes with ongoing monitoring and evaluation. **Specific strategies to integrate monitoring and evaluation of your adaptive learning are described in Unit 7 of this guide.** Developing a monitoring and evaluation plan for your adaptive learning is important because you need to know if your strategies to strengthen or start adaptive learning are being implemented and if those strategies are proving effective to increase the use of adaptive learning by your teams and projects.

STEP 8: PAUSE AND REFLECT, REASSESS, ADAPT, AND CONTINUE

While assessment is often viewed as an initial, one-time stage, the cycle of assessment and improvement should be continuous. This is important to understanding whether the strategies are working or not and will allow you to adapt your work to integrate or strengthen adaptive learning. Unit 6 provides more information on pause and reflect and its role in the project cycle.

As you integrate adaptive learning into your MOMENTUM project work over time, different strengths and gaps may require attention. Design a reassessment schedule with your team that balances resource availability with monitoring needs. Maturity assessments, such as the CLA Maturity Spectrum, will identify how competencies grow and change over time. This may involve repeating the entire assessment process or completing a series of formal or informal assessments of specific processes in need of improvement.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT OF STRENGTHS AND GAPS OF YOUR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Resource	Description	Relevance	Link
Selected Assessment Tools Relevant to Adaptive Learning			
Adaptive Management Self-Assessment Tool	ADAPT's Adaptive Management Self-Assessment is a flexible tool including seven to nine survey-style questions for each of five project domains. Minimal resource requirements, depending on chosen format.	A high-value tool for gauging your project's processes for adaptive learning.	https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/ADAPT_Self_Assessment.pdf
CLA Maturity Spectrum	The CLA Maturity Spectrum is similar to the ADAPT Self-Assessment but uses the six domains of the CLA framework. Traditionally requires in-person format.	Similar to the ADAPT Self-Assessment but may be more familiar to those utilizing existing CLA resources.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cla_maturity_spectrum_handouts_20170612_0.pdf

Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit (MECAT)	MEASURE Evaluation's MECAT is a multi-modal, in-depth assessment tool designed for country-level projects. Collates granular data in a dashboard format.	Far more resource intensive than the ADAPT Self-Assessment or the CLA Maturity Spectrum but provides more granular data.	https://www.measureevaluation.org/pima/m-e-capacity
Tools for Causal Analysis and Prioritization			
Five Whys for RCA Tool	Provides an overview of the Five Whys approach to root cause analysis and a worksheet for completing the exercise.	Projects can use the Five Whys approach to identify underlying causes for gaps in their processes for adaptive learning.	https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/QAPI/downloads/FiveWhys.pdf
5 Whys: Finding the Root Cause	A short video explaining the Five Whys approach to root cause analysis.	A helpful supplement to the Five Whys for RCA tool.	http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/Tools/5-Whys-Finding-the-Root-Cause.aspx
How to Use the Fishbone Tool for Root Cause Analysis	Provides a brief overview of the Fishbone Diagram approach to root cause analysis, with examples included.	Projects can use Fishbone Diagrams to supplement the Five Whys approach to identify underlying causes for gaps in their processes for adaptive learning.	https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/QAPI/downloads/FishboneRevised.pdf
Cause and Effect Diagram	Additional resources for using Fishbone Diagrams for root cause analysis.	Helpful supplemental information for projects interested in using Fishbone Diagrams.	http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/Tools/CauseandEffectDiagram.aspx
Appendix B: Prioritize Opportunities for Improvement	Describes three methods for prioritizing opportunities for improvement: Multi-Voting, Prioritization Matrices, and PICK Charts.	Helpful tools for projects prioritizing gaps to address after completion of assessments.	https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/systems/hospital/fallpxtraining/implguide-appendixb.html
Guide to Prioritization Techniques	A detailed description of prioritization methods, including Multi-Voting, Strategy Grids, the Hanlon Method, and Prioritization Matrices.	Additional tools for projects prioritizing gaps to address after completion of assessments.	https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Gudie-to-Prioritization-Techniques.pdf

USAID Resources for Post-Evaluation Action Planning			
Utilizing and Learning From Evaluations	General guidance from USAID to support projects in using evaluations effectively.	Helpful guidance for projects planning evaluations, particularly with regard to use of insights from those evaluations.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/utilizing-and-learning-evaluations
Post-Evaluation Action Plans	Guidance from USAID on developing post-evaluation action plans.	Helpful guidance for acting on insights from evaluations for processes for adaptive learning.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/post-evaluation-action-plans-0

UNIT 4: MODIFYING YOUR ENVIRONMENT TO INTEGRATE OR STRENGTHEN ADAPTIVE LEARNING
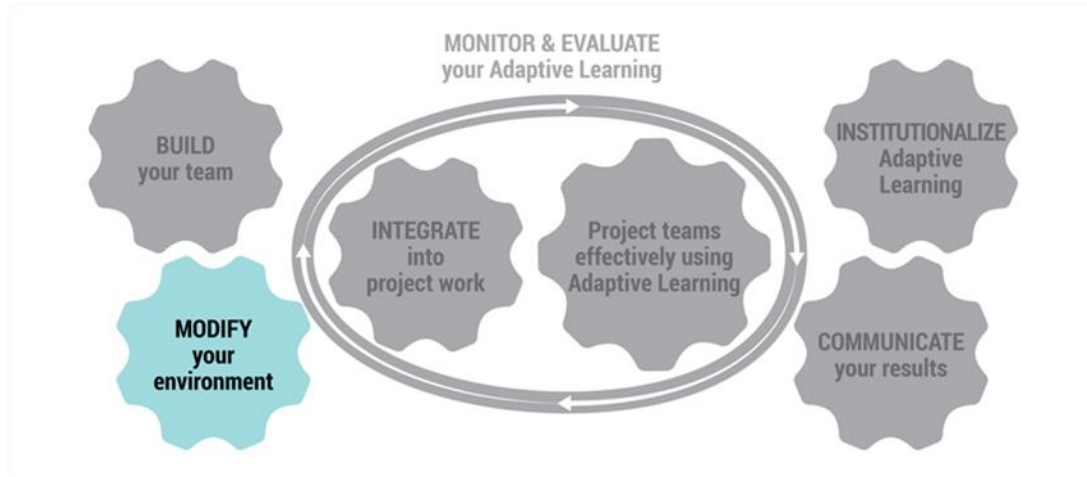
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify and understand specific factors within your MOMENTUM project's environment that can facilitate or hinder the integration of adaptive learning into project design, implementation, and improvement.
- Identify and understand factors external to the project that can facilitate or hinder the integration of adaptive learning.
- Identify and use specific strategies to strengthen a project's environment, including its staff, to better integrate adaptive learning.

INTRODUCTION

The operating environment of your organization includes factors internal and external that influence its activities and decisions, including its systems, culture, and people. Internal environmental factors include your project's goal, leadership, and management, among others. Organizational culture is a large part of the project environment (see Box 4.1). Additionally, external factors can affect how an implementing organization makes decisions and carries out actions. These include but are not limited to local and national policies, regulations, and governance structures; local and national community contexts; and funding structures and funder agreements. Together, these internal and external environmental factors help determine whether adaptive learning is welcome and possible or untrusted and challenged. For example, USAID has prioritized adaptive learning in the MOMENTUM suite of awards, as reflected in Result 3 of its results framework, as well as in the processes and systems that have been set up within and across awards, facilitating the use of adaptive learning by MOMENTUM implementing organizations.

BOX 4.1: DEFINITIONS

Organizational Environment	Internal and external factors, including management structure, organizational culture, and local and national policies and context, that influence an organization's activities and decisions.[14]
Organizational Culture	Values, philosophy, mission, norms, behaviors, or "rules of the road" accepted by the organization and its members as normal.[15]

Your organization's environment can either support or hinder the integration of adaptive learning into project design, implementation, and improvement by supporting or hindering a rapid, flexible, collaborative approach to project work.[16] For instance, beneficial management structures delegate decision-making authority to project team members in appropriate situations. These structures allow for rapid adaptation based on thorough knowledge of local context and ability to respond to changing context. In contrast, other management structures centralize decision-making authority in managers not directly involved in the work, which creates a potential bottleneck in the processes of learning and adapting and results in more rigid decision-making. Thus, modifying an organization's environment can improve a project team's ability to integrate adaptive learning into its work.

For your team to successfully use adaptive learning to achieve better outcomes, you need to address environmental factors that are barriers and strengthen factors that can facilitate your goals. While a multitude of factors influence your project's environment and your ability to use adaptive learning, this unit focuses on management structures, structures of budgets and contracts, operational systems, performance management and reward/incentive structures, and organizational culture. Stakeholder collaboration and engagement is another critical component of building a supportive environment for adaptive learning and is covered in detail in Unit 6.

ASSESS YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Modifying the organizational environment to support integration of adaptive learning requires first identifying internal and external environmental factors that may support or hinder adaptive learning. If you have completed one of the readiness assessments recommended in Unit 3 (Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning), those results will provide a starting point for understanding your strengths and gaps to build a team primed to use adaptive learning. If you have not conducted an assessment recommended in Unit 3, or if your organizational environment has changed since completing the initial readiness assessment, you can use the assessment guidance provided within this unit. Box 4.2 contains key questions or discussion topics that assess organizational environment (enabling) factors, such as culture and leadership, implementation and operations processes, and funding and financial operations.

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[14] Sharfman and Dean 1991, "Conceptualizing and Measuring the Organizational Environment: A Multidimensional Approach."

[15] USAID Learning Lab, CLA Toolkit: Enhancing Organizational Culture for CLA.

[16] Lomi, Alessandro, Erik R.Larsen, and Ari Ginsberg. 1997. "Adaptive Learning in Organizations: A System Dynamics-Based Exploration." *Journal of Management* 23 (4): 561-82. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639702300404.

BOX 4.2: SAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Response Scale: Not Yet in Place, Partially in Place, In Place

Adapted from ADAPT's Adaptive Management Self-Assessment Tool.

Culture and Leadership

- Is a shared understanding of progress, complete with project information, data, and outcomes, made accessible to all?
- Do strategies and planning processes provide time for periodic reviews and adaptation?
- Do leaders create space and permission for experimentation and appropriate risk?
- Do leaders prioritize learning and critical reflection?
- Are staff free to share ideas and test out new practices that might fail?
- Is performance feedback based on team members' success and failures at learning and adapting?
- Are cross-team collaboration and mentoring promoted?

Implementation and Operations

- Do flexible work plans and budgets give teams consistent processes for adaptation?
- Do approaches focus on piloting, testing, and adapting multiple ideas?
- Are processes such as scenario planning used to help work be anticipatory rather than just reactive?
- Is decision-making devolved where appropriate to support rapid and context-informed action?
- Do weekly team meetings provide a regular forum for sharing information, discussing progress, and raising challenges when they occur?
- Are regular reviews with the whole team (including other departments such as finance, human resources, and operations) used to reflect on progress toward agreed-upon goals and appropriateness of project strategy and tactics?
- Is there a shared vision and good communication between project and operational teams?
- Do systems (such as finance and procurement) and human resources (such as recruitment, on-boarding, and incentives) support and reinforce organizational expectations of agility and adaptation?

Funding and Financial Operations

- Do funding mechanisms enable flexibility and experimentation?
- Is there an adequate budget for MEL?
- Are there expectations of project review and redesign during implementation?

- Are reporting requirements not burdensome?
- Can the organization recruit staff for critical thinking and innovation skills, not just years of experience?
- Is accountability focused on outcomes, not on outputs?
- Have relationships been established with donors that allow for indicators, budgets, and work plans to be adjusted in a timely fashion?
- Is there regular and informal communication with donors about changes to context, project learnings, challenges, and progress?
- Do the grant compliance systems support project adaptation?
- Do operations and finance teams support contextually relevant solutions and will they attempt to negotiate for exemptions to unfeasible policies or changes needed based on learning and changing context?

In addition to these internal factors, external factors may include other institutions or structures that impact your organization (e.g., governments, funders, NGOs, communities) and the local, regional, or national context and culture (e.g., laws, policies, regulations, communications and travel infrastructure, openness to rapid change).

Once you have identified and prioritized environmental factors that might hinder the integration of adaptive learning in your MOMENTUM project, convene a team to understand the underlying causes of these gaps, create plans to address them, and implement those plans with continuous monitoring (for more on the general process of assessing and using assessment results, see Unit 3: Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning).

START MODIFYING OR STRENGTHENING YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Modifying the organizational environment based on the insights generated by the assessment may mean altering several factors fundamental to the way your organization works. This process requires buy-in at all levels, active engagement and commitment from leadership, and time and resources to carry out the changes. This work may take time but is an important investment for better implementation; you can also start small with a single activity team. Gaps that can hinder the integration of adaptive learning into project work can appear in any environmental factor—internal or external—but important gaps can include management structure, budgets, and organizational culture.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Management structure can impact almost every facet of a project's work: decision-making, communication, hiring, partnerships with stakeholders, collaboration, individual scopes of work, team culture, and many more. Rigid, top-down hierarchies can impede the integration of adaptive learning by slowing communication between team members, creating decision-making bottlenecks, impeding collaboration, and fostering a team culture that discourages or actively prevents adaptation and learning. By contrast, more equitable, less

formal structures can facilitate the integration of adaptive learning by easing communication, decision-making, and collaboration and by fostering a team culture that incentivizes adaptation and learning.

Successfully modifying your MOMENTUM project management structure requires leadership buy-in and willingness to try different structures, which may require delegating some authority from central managers to teams and frontline workers as they learn. Such a change will require you to rethink the kinds of authorization necessary and available at various levels of staff and management, streamline the chain-of-approval process, and explicitly specify which decisions require higher approval.

BUDGETING PROCESSES AND STRUCTURE

Project budgets are typically rigid, leaving your teams with little choice but to stick with their initial, agreed-upon plans for project design and implementation. This rigidity limits the ability of teams to learn from and adapt project work to changes over time. By contrast, building flexibility into budgets encourages the integration of insights gained over the course of project implementation. Such learning and adaptation contribute to more effective and efficient utilization of funding when conducted with diligence and accountability and can accelerate progress toward project goals.

Building budgets and budgeting processes that incorporate spending flexibility and regular opportunities for review and revision begins with encouraging a close, collaborative relationship between project teams and finance teams. Close collaboration between these two teams contributes to clearer and more effective communication and negotiation with internal leadership and funders. Depending on your organizational structure, this relationship may involve shared meetings, embedding of finance team members in activity teams, and/or shared authorship of proposals and concept notes. While this may be challenging to do with project funding that comes with certain restrictions, integrating activities across project budgets or building in use of unrestricted organizational funding may allow you the flexibility to learn from and adapt project work as needed.

To the greatest extent possible, you should work with donors and funders (or other stakeholders) to encourage budgets that leave room for adjustment over the course of the MOMENTUM project. Specific strategies may include budget envelopes, firm budget headings with the flexibility to adjust line items within those headings, and unallocated funds. Finally, you should create internal processes for when and how budget renegotiation with funders, donors, and payers will occur and for what criteria will be used to prioritize this work. For examples of funding mechanisms supporting adaptation, see Box 4.3.

BOX 4.3: CASE STUDY

Modifying a Funding Mechanism and Reporting Requirements to Support Adaptation

Mercy Corps, Promoting Partner Autonomy and Learning to Fight Ebola in Liberia

During the Ebola crisis in 2014, Mercy Corps launched the Ebola Community Action Platform (ECAP) in Liberia. This social mobilization program was designed to raise local awareness and improve information dissemination on Ebola. Because Mercy Corps and other international partners lacked the local contextual knowledge or networks to effectively reach communities, they engaged with local community-based partner organizations to spread educational messages about Ebola prevention and care.

ECAP created a funding mechanism conducive for adaptation by having very few requirements for partners submitting grant applications. This allowed partners to be flexible and creative when identifying mobilization activities, leveraging their contextual knowledge and insights. Additionally, ECAP awarded fixed obligation grants or fixed amount awards, which did not require burdensome screening or financial reporting and permitted its subgrantees to shift strategies over the course of the program. Reporting through the mobile data-collection platform also supported partner autonomy. A publicly available reporting dashboard provided transparency and accountability to the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the Ministry of Health, and other stakeholders who were able to track program activities and progress.

As a result of the success of this platform, the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Mercy Corps shifted their standard approach to limit the number of reporting indicators and contractual requirements in partner subagreements to encourage learning and adaptation.

Key Lessons

- Address budget rigidity at the grant application phase by minimizing reporting and oversight requirements. Fixed amount awards allow payments to be made based on a project's achievement of milestones. This funding mechanism provides organizations and teams with flexibility in the use of funds and has fewer reporting requirements, allowing for ongoing adaptation in the use of project funds and more time to focus on achieving better outcomes.

- During contract negotiations, discuss budget flexibility. Allow for renegotiations following quarterly review meetings or other clearly defined decision-making processes between stakeholders.

- Indicators that track progress toward programmatic goals should allow projects or organizations flexibility in adapting their approaches based on lessons learned during implementation, instead of monitoring fidelity to the originally planned activities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture plays a critical role in promoting or preventing the integration of adaptive learning by either embracing or rejecting continuous learning, including learning from failure, openness to change, collaborative working styles, and transparent, honest communication.

Strengthening a culture conducive to adaptive learning may involve providing education about adaptive learning, modeling adaptive learning behaviors, and using other strategies to establish a project team primed to use adaptive learning (see Unit 5: Building a Team Primed to Use Adaptive Learning in Their Work). Leadership engagement is critical for this work to move forward and be effective, as is the identification of an influential champion within the organization who can help elevate the visibility of and priority on adaptive learning. See Boxes 4.4 and 4.5 for more specific strategies for modifying organizational culture by increasing the communication and celebration of learning—even when it results from failure.

BOX 4.4: STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING THE COMMUNICATION AND CELEBRATION OF LEARNING

- Pause and reflect moments as well as other structured and planned team-level and individual-level feedback sessions.
- Coaching and review mechanisms such as supportive supervision.
- Reward structures that incentivize experimentation and adaptation.
- Adoption of communication "ground rules" for difficult conversations around failure, learning, and adaptation to encourage feedback by making such conversations routine and more comfortable.

BOX 4.5: CASE STUDY

Addressing Gaps in Organizational Culture

USAID Learning Lab, What Can the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Tell Us About Collaborating, Learning and Adapting in USAID Missions?

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is a tool designed to assess employees' impressions of organizational culture qualities within their organizations. The USAID/Senegal Mission used this tool and identified the following areas for improvement: 1) communication from Mission leadership; 2) workload management; 3) building and applying staff competencies and talents; 4) cultural diversity and work unit complementarities; 5) performance management (recognizing high performance and managing low performance); and 6) generating trust and motivation among staff. The Mission's Senior Leadership Team (composed of office directors) and the Foreign Service Nationals Advisory Committee subsequently developed a plan for exploring these six themes.

To cultivate open dialogue, they chose an outside facilitator who organized a series of meetings with staff to further explore and discuss FEVS results, focusing on addressing issues affecting the Mission's ability to achieve its development objectives. In these meetings, staff had the opportunity to raise concerns and propose new ideas. The Mission used these meetings to identify root causes of the issues and develop plans to address them. The meetings served to generate greater trust and communication between leadership and staff by demonstrating leadership commitment to working together to identify concerns, explore data, and invest in solutions emerging from lower staff levels within a complex system that includes USAID as well as external stakeholders.

Dedicating time to focus on the relationship between staff and leadership and build trust can enable staff to open up more, take on more initiative, risks, and responsibilities, and perform at their full potential. The meetings allowed all staff levels to interact and collaborate in a non-hierarchical manner and to create and transmit knowledge among themselves in ways that would not have happened otherwise. The small group discussions during the meetings about the FEVS results created a common narrative and generated plans for organizational improvement.

Key Lessons

- Improving organizational culture requires participation from all levels and types of staff. Changes to organizational culture should be representative of all positions within the organization.

- Leadership support and commitment is critical in making changes to organizational culture. Project managers and organizational leaders should initiate and drive the change process. This signals to all teams that leadership is interested in creating a culture that promotes openness and diverse perspectives.

- It is important to invest time in increasing trust between leadership and teams. This allows teams to experiment without fear of failing.

- Increase communication and openness by:

  - Creating forums for regular discussions and feedback through small and large group meetings. Meeting facilitators should encourage participation by attendees, set ground rules to respect perspectives, and encourage sharing successes and failures to allow for learning and adaptation.

  - Encouraging internal collaboration across teams in a non-hierarchical manner.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR MODIFYING YOUR ENVIRONMENT TO INTEGRATE OR STRENGTHEN ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Resource	Description	Link
Enhancing Organizational Culture for CLA	This USAID portal offers an introduction to building and strengthening organizational culture for collaboration, learning, and adaptation, as well as resources for further work.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/enhancing-organizational-culture-cla
Cultivating the CLA Enabling Environment: USAID Uganda's Mission of Leaders Program	This case study offers further information about strengthening organizational culture.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/usaiduganda_cultivating_the_cla_enabling_environment.pdf
Built to Evolve: A Donors' Guide to Making Grants Adaptive	This guide offers advice and in-depth guidance to funders on incorporating adaptive approaches into grants and funding mechanisms.	https://getbetterfaster.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Built-to-Evolve-A-Donors-Guide-to-Making-Grants-Adaptive.pdf
Adaptive Programming in Practice: Shared Lessons from the DFID-Funded LASER and SAVI Programmes	This report shares lessons about organizational environments amenable to adaptive approaches from two organizations encouraging institutional change in complex environments.	http://savi-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Laser_Savi_Report-online-version-final-120816pdf.pdf

UNIT 5: BUILDING A TEAM PRIMED TO USE ADAPTIVE LEARNING IN THEIR WORK
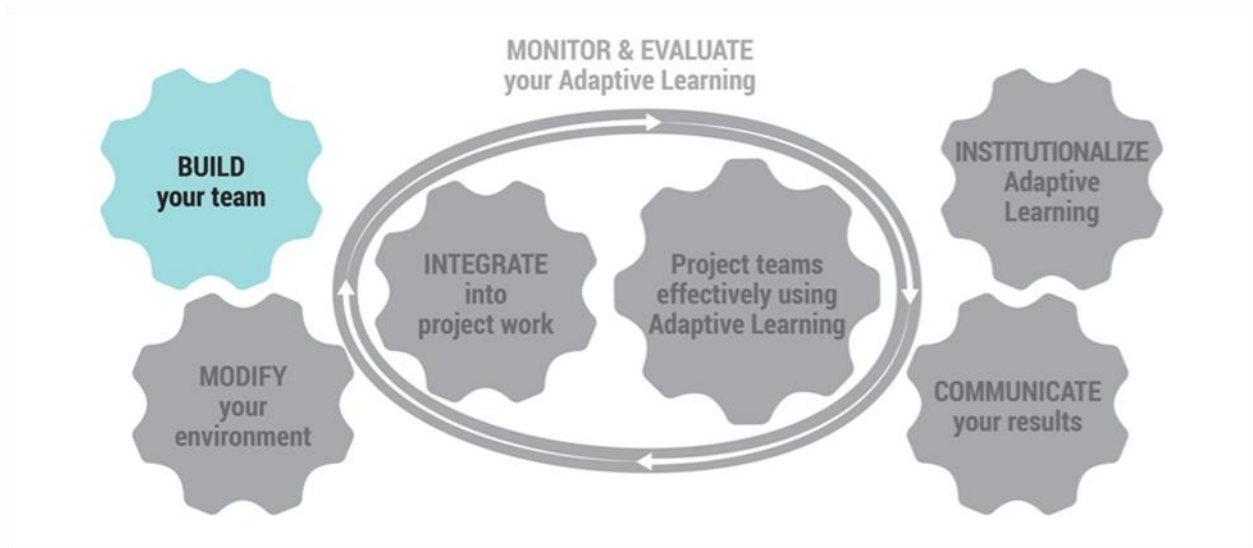
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn how to develop and support a team equipped to integrate adaptive learning.
- Understand the role of team leadership and champions in reinforcing adaptive learning.
- Identify further resources for additional training and support.

INTRODUCTION

Adaptive learning begins with individuals and teams (see Box 5.1)—because they do the work and also because they manage uncertainty, problem-solve for complexity, and make decisions about potentially changing contexts.[17] When adaptive learning is integrated into your project work, individuals and teams are better positioned for continuous improvement, responding to unforeseen challenges, redirecting resources as needed, and building on collective knowledge to produce the best possible development outcomes.[18] For MOMENTUM, this integration can result in increased provision of and demand for quality, equitable services, strengthened local capacity, and strengthened multisectoral partnerships, leading to improvements in maternal, neonatal, and child health. While tools, approaches, policies, and procedures focused on adaptation are critical, literature suggests that teams with individuals who are curious, have growth mindsets, and can empathize with their colleagues are generally better able to adapt to changing circumstances.[19] Teams that have high levels of trust and are considered safe for interpersonal risk-taking

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[17]   https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/quality/toolbox/508pdfs/improvementteams.pdf.

[18]   Haugh, Katherine, and Monalisa Salib. *What Difference Does Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Make to Development? Key Findings from Our Literature Review*. Dexis Consulting Group. 2017. https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/what-difference-does-CLA-make-key-findings.

[19]   Young, Stacey. 2019. "How USAID Is Building the Evidence Base for Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning." Knowledge Management for Development Journal 14 (2). https://www.km4djournal.org/index.php/km4dj/article/view/466.

tend to be better at learning and adapting. These individual characteristics and interpersonal dynamics are critical drivers for building high-performing teams.

BOX 5.1: DEFINITIONS

Team	The members of the organization tasked with designing, implementing, and improving project activities.

Successfully integrating adaptive learning requires more than just a high-functioning team, though beginning with a high-functioning team will likely make your effort to integrate adaptive learning more effective. Successfully integrating adaptive learning into the design, implementation, and improvement of your work requires both preparing teams to integrate adaptive learning strategies and actions and continuously supporting them as they apply and use those strategies. You should make use of USAID resources dedicated to cultivating high-performance teams in your MOMENTUM project, including the New Partners Initiative Technical Assistance (NuPITA) Project's Team Building Module Facilitator's Guide. Additionally, TeamSTEPPS is a health care-based training system for high-functioning teams: the TeamSTEPPS: Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety tool contains brief explanations of key strategies and tools used by teams for functions such as communication and leadership.

Although the focus of this unit is on teams implementing project activities, operations teams such as finance, human resources, and management should also integrate adaptive learning into their work. MOMENTUM project teams will be multidisciplinary in nature and will be required to learn and adapt together. For example, in Unit 4 (Modifying Your Environment to Integrate or Strengthen Adaptive Learning), it is noted that learning and adaptation in budgeting systems and resource utilization are integral to building an effective organizational environment. The creation of internal processes to monitor for needed changes in how resources are being budgeted and utilized requires information sharing and response planning across programmatic and finance teams.

ASSESSING YOUR TEAM'S READINESS TO INTEGRATE ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Understanding your team's readiness to integrate adaptive learning into its work requires knowing both your team members' individual capacities and the ways your team works together to design, implement, and improve project work (see Box 5.2). If you have completed one of the readiness assessments recommended in Unit 3 (Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning), those results will provide a starting point for understanding your strengths and gaps in building a team primed to use adaptive learning. If you have not conducted an assessment recommended in Unit 3, or if you are working with a new team or context, you can use the assessment guidance provided within this unit.

BOX 5.2: KEY CONCEPTS FOR ASSESSING TEAMS

Mercy Corp, ADAPT, Using the Adaptive Management Self-Assessment Tool

Assessing team members' competencies may include asking about their abilities to:

- Collaborate with others and engage stakeholders (Internal Collaboration, External Collaboration).

- Learn from failure (Adaptive Management, Quality Improvement (QI)).

- Respond quickly to new or changing circumstances (Adaptive Management, QI).

- Appropriately collect, prioritize, and use a wide range of data and information (MEL, Technical Evidence Base, Theories of Change).

Assessing the processes and systems of the organization and team may include asking about the team's:

- Methods for understanding, using, and sharing information (Knowledge Management).

- Ways of making decisions (Decision-Making).

- Culture, particularly psychological safety and opportunities for continued learning (Openness, Relationships and Networks, Continuous Learning and Improvement).

Project teams often include a wide range of skill sets and experiences from different contexts and with different donors and local stakeholders. Regardless of background, your team needs to have the ability, skill, and willingness to develop locally appropriate strategies, test them, and learn from both failures and successes. For adaptive learning to be successful, a well-prepared team must have the knowledge and abilities necessary to manage these processes while learning from them to inform action.[20]

Teams also benefit from an enabling environment (see Unit 4) that provides supportive resources, policies and procedures, and systems for adaptive learning to be put into practice. For instance, to ensure data integrity, teams need to have adequate time to access and interpret available data, design/co-design, and test data-informed solutions. Teams must have the time and resources to engage stakeholders and ensure that these activities are transparent and compliant with project parameters.[21]

Another critical aspect of integrating adaptive learning into a team is the data-driven decision-making structure of the team, recognizing that practices may vary by MOMENTUM project and/or by country in line with differences in organizational culture and environment. Teams must have sufficient capacities to be able to judge when they have enough information on hand to warrant making an adaptation to project plans. High-performing teams experienced in using adaptive learning will build skills and expertise in knowing when

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[20] RTI. *Adapting to learn and learniogn to adapt.*
https://www.rti.org/rti-press-publication/adapting-to-learn

[21] Mercy Corps. *Managing Complexity: Adaptive Management at Mercy Corps.*
https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Adaptive%20management%20paper_external.pdf.

rapid-cycle changes are appropriate, determining who needs to be informed, and developing appropriate documentation that will effectively capture the knowledge and decision-making that promoted adaptation.

START OR STRENGTHEN YOUR TEAM'S ABILITY TO INTEGRATE ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO THEIR WORK

MOMENTUM project teams will be at different stages in their development. Some teams may be well established, having worked together for years on similar projects. Others may be in the early stages of formation, whether through hiring or having existing staff join the team. Teams at different stages require different strategies for preparing them to integrate adaptive learning into their work.

DEVELOPING OR MODIFYING TEAM CULTURE TO SUPPORT THE USE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING

For teams to successfully integrate adaptive learning into their work, the project and team environment must be supportive of adaptive learning as well. Project or team culture is often mistaken as an innate characteristic of a project or a team. However, just as we use behavior change strategies to influence healthy behaviors, project and team practices can be applied to achieve a team culture that supports adaptive learning.

These practices may include the supportive supervision, coaching, and champion strategies included in this unit as well as other practices that reward both successes and failures that come from experimentation. Team practices that provide opportunities to reinforce a culture of experimentation include setting expectations during orientation and onboarding of new team members, the structure and management of team meetings, an emphasis on the provision of frequent feedback, and recognition of team members by leaders and peers. Project startup or work planning events are ideal for aligning team members around strategic goals and holding team or project events to celebrate and share learning from both successes and failures. Since team compositions frequently change over the life of a project, refreshers can be opportunities to reinforce ideas with existing team members along with orienting new ones.

Ultimately, it is important that an imperative for adaptive learning be supported by adequate time, resources, tools, and leadership to make it a reality (see Box 5.3 for example resources). Adaptive learning takes place within a safe, flexible, transparent, and trusting environment that demands, encourages, and rewards open discussion and dialogue without fear of punishment or for being wrong.

BOX 5.3: RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING PROJECT OR TEAM CULTURE

Resource	Description	Link
Is My Organization's Culture Conducive to Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting?	This blog post provides a method (with an example) for determining whether your organization's or team's culture supports the values of CLA, including adaptive learning.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/my-organization%E2%80%99s-culture-conducive-collaborating%2C-learning%2C-and-adapting
Enhancing Organizational Culture for CLA	This page in the CLA Toolkit offers further resources on understanding, building, and	https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/enhancing-organizational-culture-cla

	supporting organizational and team culture.	

ABILITIES IDENTIFYING A CHAMPION TO LEAD TEAM EFFORTS IN ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Changing the way a team works takes time, effort, and resources and can seem to compete with the day-to-day necessities of MOMENTUM project work. As a result, team members' and leadership's enthusiasm for new practices such as adaptive learning can decrease over time. Maintaining ongoing use of adaptive learning may require recruiting innovators within teams to champion the integration of adaptive learning for their work and more broadly in the MOMENTUM project and/or suite of awards. Recognizing initiative and dedication to adaptive learning within your project will help you to identify and promote champions. Such champions will exemplify commitment to a team approach and will encourage others to use adaptive learning techniques, even when the initial enthusiasm for changing the way the team works may have declined.

Ideal champions for adaptive learning are open to new ideas and ways of doing their work, and when faced with challenges, they work to understand why those challenges arose and identify new methods for resolving those challenges. They are willing to support their teammates' use of adaptive learning and to collaborate with MOMENTUM stakeholders to learn and adapt throughout the project life cycle. To ensure the dissemination of adaptive learning, you should support champions in coaching and mentoring other team members about adaptive learning principles. You should build their skills in coaching and ensure they have the time to provide coaching for the team, for further organizational spread and sustainability of the practice. Practically, you should select a team member as champion who is people centered and action oriented; has a track record of adaptability; is highly respected because of their approach to collaboration, learning, and adapting (rather than just by their degrees or job titles); and is knowledgeable, open, willing, and honest about their commitment to adaptive learning.

RECRUITING AND FORMING A NEW TEAM READY TO USE ADAPTIVE LEARNING

When introducing new staff to MOMENTUM project teams or choosing existing staff for a project, several strategies in the recruitment or transition process will help attract and select candidates with a mindset and abilities conducive to adaptive learning.

Emphasize critical thinking and analytical skills, as appropriate, during position recruitment. In the job description, you can include language that describes the importance of candidates who are inquisitive and flexible and willing to learn, change, or even fail, which will signal to potential applicants the type of team member needed in addition to required core technical competencies.[22] An added benefit of integrating these considerations into recruitment and team formation is that they will also contribute to organizational culture. An organization that includes these kinds of capacities in all their job descriptions is an organization that supports adaptive learning.

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[22] Salib, Monalisa. 2020. "Opinion: 3 Ways You Can Get the Candidates You Really Need." Devex, Jan. 2, 2020. https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-3-ways-you-can-get-the-candidates-you-really-need-96162.

Behavioral-based interviews should assess a candidate's specific competencies in data use, problem-solving, and adaptation through the use of problem-based or scenario-based questions. For example, when asking candidates about a time they resolved a particularly difficult problem, include probing questions about how they approached the issue, how they negotiated with others, whether they worked with a team, what role patience and flexibility played in their resolution, what reflections they currently have about confronting a similar situation in the future, and whether they would do anything differently (and why).

These questions will give the hiring manager or interview panel important insights about the candidate while also communicating to them your expectations about what is required to meet the needs of the position. The case study in Box 5.4 from Mercy Corps is an example of how a project used these approaches.

BOX 5.4: CASE STUDY

Building a Team Primed to Integrate Adaptive Learning Starts With Hiring

Mercy Corps, Building an Adaptive Team for Market Systems Development in Acholi, Uganda

Mercy Corps' Revitalizing Agriculture Incomes and New Markets (RAIN) program in the Acholi region of northern Uganda aimed to improve farm production and profitability, agribusiness and trade performance, and access to financial services through a dynamic market systems approach. The program focused on recruiting and building a team with these specific objectives in mind.

Program leadership prioritized recruiting local team members with relevant knowledge about the Acholi region and context. Additionally, they made a dedicated effort to hire women, both because women would better understand and reach out to the program's female audience and in response to feedback about recruiting and retaining women within RAIN. Finally, leadership prioritized finding candidates who were inquisitive by nature, a quality they valued in a team setting. To ensure they hired the most appropriate team members, they used creative interviewing techniques such as problem-solving, and occasionally, they took candidates to the market to assess how well the candidate could observe and analyze context.

RAIN's hiring strategy accomplished its goal of building teams that successfully integrated adaptive learning into their work. For instance, RAIN recognized the need to increase farmers' use of tillage services. Through close cross-team collaboration, they drew on various monitoring and assessment sources to understand the barriers (lack of on-hand cash, high risk of cash loan programs) and combined the expertise of three teams (financial services, tillage, MEL) to devise a solution: cashless loans based on vouchers for tillage services and gradual repayment by the farmers. The team members' inquisitiveness, collaborative spirit, and knowledge of the local environment enabled this successful solution.

Key Lessons

- Include questions in the hiring process to identify candidates who use or are familiar with adaptive learning.

- Use creative recruiting and interviewing techniques, such as problem-based scenarios to test critical thinking skills, inquisitiveness, and analytical skills.

- Hire team members who are naturally curious and can use local knowledge to help projects adapt to context.

INTRODUCING AN ESTABLISHED TEAM TO ADAPTIVE LEARNING

In an established and even a high-performing team, there may be members who have never heard of adaptive learning. Some teams may already be using adaptive learning techniques but may not be aware they are doing so. Therefore, it is good practice to begin by establishing a shared understanding of adaptive learning. Online resources, such as USAID's introductory video on CLA in the Program Cycle, the CLA podcast series, or the CLA Case Competition write-ups, can be useful in creating a common language to discuss adaptive learning concepts and strategies and serve as an important gateway to further resources. Box 5.5 is an example of an exercise used by NuPITA to build awareness and skills in a range of key areas, including communication and listening, recognizing failure and seeking out solutions rather than assigning blame, and continuous evaluation and data use to improve and adapt to changing context.

BOX 5.5: TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE—FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS

Adapted from NuPITA Team Building Module Facilitator's Guide.

Hand each participant a sheet of paper. Explain that you are going to give directions. Participants will replicate a drawing through simple verbal instructions. There are two rules: 1) each person must remain silent throughout the exercise, and 2) no one may ask a question.

Give the following instructions:

- Draw a circle.
- Draw a triangle inside the circle.
- Draw a square in the corner.
- Write your name on the paper.

Have all participants hold up their picture. Ask participants why their drawings are not similar. Everyone heard the same message, yet everyone perceived the message differently. Comments may include "we could only be silent and not ask questions," "the instructions were basic with no detail," and "the instructions were quick."

Tell participants that none of their pictures match, so everyone will try this again. Ask the group to suggest adaptations to the instructions to make it more likely their pictures will match. Comments may include "more detail," "be more specific," "let us ask questions," and "let us work together."

Ask the group to flip over the paper and start again. Give following instructions:

- Draw a circle 4 inches in diameter in the center of your paper.
- Draw a triangle inside the circle so that all three corners are touching the circle.
- Draw a 1-inch square on the bottom-left corner of your paper.
- Write "your name," spelled out Y-O-U-R-N-A-M-E, on the bottom-right side of the paper.

Have all participants hold up their papers, and hold up one you prepared in advance. They should match.

Discuss the process by which participants improved their process. They:

- Recognized a failure from gathered data (comparing the pictures).
- Sought to understand it rather than seek to assign blame for it.
- Figured out alternative strategies to achieve their goal.
- Implemented the new strategy and gathered data on it (compared pictures again).

Close by making the following points:

- A team needs to communicate well and listen well to get the intended results.
- A team needs to recognize when they have failed to achieve the goal and seek out ways to learn from their failure rather than placing blame.
- A team needs to constantly gather and evaluate information to improve, adapt, and shift with circumstances.

SUPPORTING A TEAM TO USE ADAPTIVE LEARNING OVER TIME

As part of an established or newly formed MOMENTUM project team, good leadership and other support is needed to help establish and continue using adaptive learning. This can come through supportive supervision or more targeted coaching. **A number of excellent resources provide details on good practices in supportive supervision and coaching, including the [WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist Implementation Guide](#)**. Box 5.6 contains examples of coaching questions that can be used to facilitate reflection among individuals and a team on opportunities to learn and adapt during the course of project implementation.

BOX 5.6: COACHING QUESTIONS FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Adapted from [Managing Complexity: Adaptive Management at Mercy Corps.](#)

- Why did you choose to do it that way? What information or data did you base your choice on?
- What works and doesn't work about doing it that way? What are the (intentional or unintentional) effects of doing it this way? Effects on people and stakeholders? On systems, practices, and outcomes?
- Can you imagine doing it in a completely different way? How? Can you see any benefits to a different approach?
- What contextual factors (anything from government policies to local cultural expectations) affect how you choose to do it? How do they affect it?
- What connections have you seen between things you previously considered unrelated?

Box 5.7 describes an effective coaching technique called Opportunity, Ability, Motivation (OAM) often used to support behavior change associated with a quality improvement intervention. This type of coaching model, focusing on addressing barriers, can be applied widely to help facilitate the uptake of new learning or adaptation strategies.

BOX 5.7: CASE STUDY

Using Opportunity, Ability, Motivation (OAM) in Coaching for Adaptive Learning in the BetterBirth Trial

Ariadne Labs, BetterBirth Trial

During the BetterBirth Trial, coaches helped implement the WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist and change birth attendant behaviors using a coaching approach. This approach used the Opportunity, Ability, Motivation (OAM) framework. Coaches were trained how to diagnose underlying challenges to behavior change as opportunity (e.g., no supplies), ability (e.g., not knowing how to do or when to do a practice), and motivation (e.g., not believing or being willing to do a practice) and to develop support to help problem-solve. For instance, in one facility, birth attendants were not listening to fetal heartbeats. It was found that it was difficult to hear the fetal heartbeat with a stethoscope, and so they rarely did that step. After a stillbirth at the facility, the BetterBirth coach worked with the birth attendants, asking several questions. First, she asked about other methods for listening to fetal heart sounds. Then she asked, "How might an FHS Doppler [a hand-held ultrasound machine] help you avoid such a situation in the future?" The birth attendants brainstormed and concluded that the Doppler would help them hear the fetal heartbeat better. Also, by letting the mother hear the fetal heartbeat, the Doppler could either reassure the mother that all was well or help convince her to accept a referral if necessary. The birth attendants agreed that having and using a Doppler would improve their services and outcomes in the labor room.

Key Lessons

- Behavior change interventions and adoptions of evidence-informed practices are enhanced when using a coaching framework that diagnoses and addresses common barriers.[i]

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[i] Kara, Nabihah et al. 2017. "The BetterBirth Program: Pursuing Effective Adoption and Sustained Use of the WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist Through Coaching-Based Implementation in Uttar Pradesh, India." *Global Health: Science and Practice* 5 (2): 232-43. https://www.ghspjournal.org/content/5/2/232..

Specific team functions that the supportive supervision of coaching could focus on include the following:

- **Clarify Roles.** Clearly state each team member's scope of work but include a sentence that allows them to adapt their role to novel circumstances and information. Consider using a Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed (RACI) Matrix to streamline decision-making among team members.
- **Encourage Data Use.** When making decisions or adapting project design, implementation, or improvement efforts or following internal processes and systems, ask team members to find, interpret, and use available data.

- **Foster a Common Strategic Goal.** Encourage all team members to contribute to the setting of the goal and refer to it frequently, but allow team members flexibility in the approach they take to reaching that goal. Involve team members in building mutually agreed-upon performance standards (e.g., how your team defines "doing a good job"), and include those in normal performance evaluations.

- **Encourage Problem-Solving.** Build time into team members' schedules for problem identification, problem prioritization, and solution development in order to encourage your team to learn from failure and adapt successfully based on new findings. Additionally, be open to hearing about failure and be understanding of and responsive to it rather than defensive or blaming. Adopt an attitude of "fail fast and respond quickly."

- **Reinforce Positive Behaviors.** Provide an enabling environment in which team members' pursuit of and experimentation with adaptive learning techniques are recognized and reinforced. Acknowledge any issues that may have been averted because of quick, critical reflection and adaptive thinking to help drive the value of the principles and practices of adaptive learning (see Unit 4).[23]

Box 5.8 shares the work to build capacity within a team through a combination of training, leadership coaching, and a focus on culture.

BOX 5.8: CASE STUDY

Building an Adaptive Team for Market Systems Development in Acholi, Uganda (continued from Box 5.4)

RAIN's efforts to build a team who used adaptive learning did not stop with hiring. Team leaders prioritized employee skill-building through internal and external trainings, modeled coaching and mentoring techniques, and focused on "soft" factors of team culture during onboarding and handovers. Soon employees were mentoring each other, offering supportive criticism and advice to their peers, and helping each other to more fully develop their skills. This collaboration led to a team culture of openness and curiosity, in which all team members were willing to both give and receive feedback. Team leadership supported this culture of openness with operating norms, such as weekly meetings to serve as touchpoints for problem-solving and an open-door policy and personal connections with each team member to fight traditional hierarchical expectations.

Key Lessons

- Build team culture intentionally using one-on-one and group interactions as well as team operating procedures.
- Model the kind of team culture you want to achieve "from the top" in your own leadership style.

Leadership can support the culture within a team through a number of strategies. Box 5.9 summarizes five strategies that can be adapted and adopted for use before and during the team's design and implementation of a project.

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[23] Adapted from Creating an Adaptive, Action-Oriented Team.

BOX 5.9: STRATEGIES FOR TEAM LEADERS TO SUPPORT AN OPEN, FLEXIBLE, TRUSTING TEAM CULTURE

Adapted from Four Practices of People with Possibilities.

The following practices can help teams develop an open, flexible, and trusting team culture:

- Care about team members' welfare by providing encouragement for work done, promoting work-life balance by setting rules about work time and holidays, and creating time for team members to better understand and work with one another.

- Create a performance management plan and feedback mechanism for team members that explicitly recognizes and provides feedback on adaptive learning.

- Establish ground rules for difficult conversations that encourage the sharing of ideas around tough topics like progress and failures.

- Delegate decision-making authority to team members, as appropriate, to allow learning. Allow team members to take the lead on projects while providing supportive supervision, coaching, and feedback for improvement.

- Make time to pause, reflect, and adapt by creating time for team members to present opportunities, challenges, and lessons from projects as an opportunity to share knowledge and develop or adapt new solutions with all relevant stakeholders.

USEFUL RESOURCES TO BUILD TEAMS PRIMED FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Resource	Description	Link
Going Beyond Technical Skills: How to Build an Adaptive Team	This USAID podcast considers important questions about how to hire the right team members to build an adaptive learning team.	https://www.usaidlearninglab.org/content/going-beyond-technical-skills-how-build-adaptive-team
A Guide to Hiring Adaptive Employees	This tool from USAID lists the competencies and qualifications of adaptive employees and offers concrete interview questions for assessing candidates for those adaptive competencies.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/guide_to_hiring_adaptive_employees_r.pdf
Framing CLA: Openness in Uganda	This USAID blog post offers more detail about the RAIN case study from Acholi, Uganda.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/framing-cla-openness-uganda
Learning about Learning: Leadership	This USAID one-page summary provides a succinct summary of leadership and its importance in supporting a team focusing on learning and the environment needed. Also explores how leadership differs from management.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/L2_Leadership.pdf

Team Building Module Facilitator's Guide	This tool from USAID's New Partners Initiative Technical Assistance (NuPITA) Project outlines a team building workshop that helps teams and organizations envision and build a high-functioning team.	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Team-Building-Module-Facilitators-Guide.pdf
TeamSTEPPS: Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety	TeamSTEPPS by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is a health care-based training system for high-functioning teams. This tool contains brief explanations of key strategies and tools used by teams for functions such as communication and leadership.	https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/publications/files/pocketguide.pdf
Being an Effective Team Player	While aimed at medical students, this WHO Safety Curriculum provides an overview of teams, how they work, and what makes them successful. It is also health care based.	https://www.who.int/patientsafety/education/curriculum/who_mc_topic-4.pdf
Improvement Teams	Comprehensive resource by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) about forming teams and supporting their functioning. While written for improvement teams, many of the concepts apply to project teams who integrate improvement through adaptive learning into their day-to-day work and overall approach.	https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/quality/toolbox/508pdfs/improvementteams.pdf
Is My Organization's Culture Conducive to Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting?	This blog post provides a method (with an example) for determining whether your organization's or team's culture supports the values of CLA, including adaptive learning.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/my-organization%E2%80%99s-culture-conducive-collaborating%2C-learning%2C-and-adapting
Enhancing Organizational Culture for CLA	This page in the CLA Toolkit offers further resources on understanding, building, and supporting organizational and team culture.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/enhancing-organizational-culture-cla
WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist Implementation Guide	This resource provides guidance on coaching strategies and tools for facilitating behavior change as part of a quality improvement initiative. The strategies detailed are widely applicable to project work.	https://www.who.int/patientsafety/implementation/checklists/childbirth-checklist_implementation-guide/en/
Managing Complexity: Adaptive Management at Mercy Corps	A resource for helping assess whether team structures, people, and skills support adaptive management.	https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Adaptive%20management%20paper_external.pdf

UNIT 6: INTEGRATING ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO PROJECT DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND IMPROVEMENT
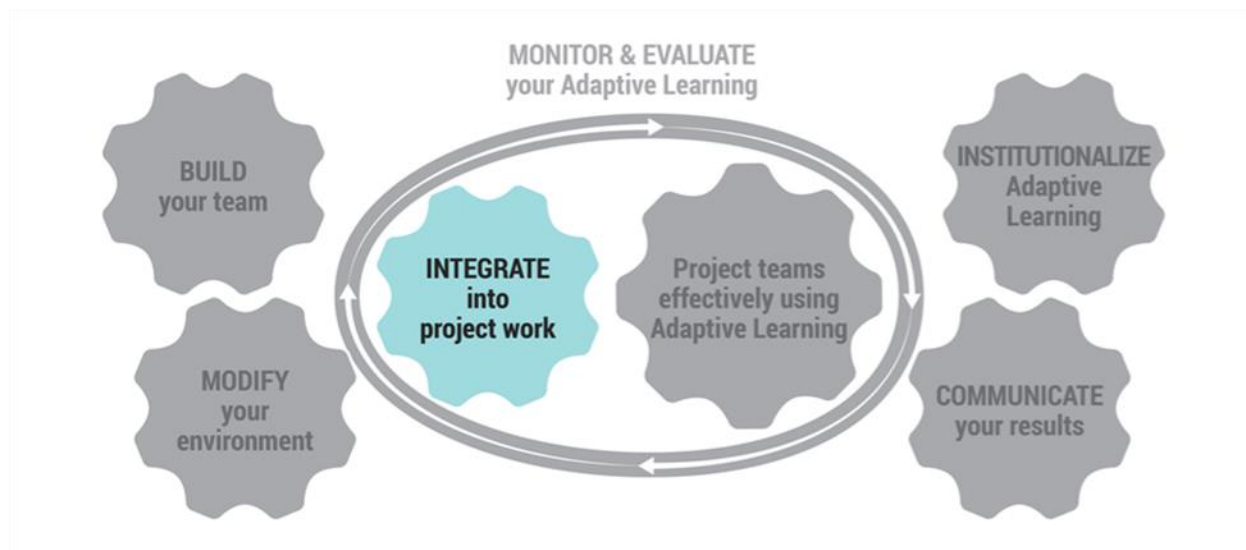
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify strategies and resources for integrating adaptive learning throughout your project.
- Understand how to use these strategies to apply adaptive learning at each stage of a project.

INTRODUCTION

Adaptive learning can add value to every stage of the project cycle. As MOMENTUM teams design strategies and plan project activities, adaptive learning helps them understand local context and choose or adapt their strategies based on that understanding. Such adaptation in the design phase can increase the initial success of project work. As teams implement their activities, adaptive learning helps them recognize and respond to changes in the local context as well as to both successful and unsuccessful strategies. As teams make improvements (or adjustments to their original plans), adaptive learning helps them to recognize if that improvement is working, why it's working (or not working), and how it's working (or not working). In short, adaptive learning provides the team with a view of how the project is functioning at every stage. The USAID Learning Lab provides descriptions of different stages of a project (see Box 6.1).

BOX 6.1: DEFINITIONS

Project	A set of complementary activities, over an established timeline and budget, intended to achieve a discrete development result.
Design	The process by which a team defines how it will operationalize the discrete development result or set of results.

Implementation	An ongoing process in which team members work collaboratively to ensure that activities taken together are achieving the intended development outcome(s).
Improvement	An intentional process in which team members make iterative adjustments to project design or implementation in response to new information and changes in context.

All definitions adapted from USAID Learning Lab.[24]

ASSESS YOUR CAPACITY AND USE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING IN THE PROJECT CYCLE

Before you can begin to start or strengthen the integration of adaptive learning into your project, you must first recognize where and when in the project cycle you may already be using adaptive learning principles and practices (Box 6.2). If you have completed one of the readiness assessments recommended in Unit 3 (Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning), those results will provide a starting point for understanding your strengths and gaps to integrate adaptive learning into your project work. If you have not conducted an assessment recommended in Unit 3, or if you are working with a new project or organizational setting, you can use the assessment guidance provided within this unit.

BOX 6.2: ASSESSING THE INTEGRATION OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING IN THE PROJECT CYCLE

Key concepts from the USAID Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Maturity Spectrum

- The continuous use, analysis, and evolution of the project's theories of change (Theories of Change).

- The ongoing use and learning from scenario planning (Scenario Planning).

- The use, quality, and timeliness of pause and reflect moments in the project (Pause & Reflect).

- The application of what was learned to adaptive management, quality improvement, or other improvement methods (Adaptive Management, Decision-Making).

- The type of budget and resources for the project's implementation mechanisms (Mission Resources, CLA in Implementing Mechanisms).

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[24] USAID Learning Lab. Project Design & Implementation. https://usaidlearninglab.org/program-cycle-component/project-design-and-implementation; and USAID Learning Lab. Adapting. https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-component/adapting.

Because use of information, including data, is core to adaptive learning, you should also assess your team's use of data at all stages of your activities and project as a whole (design, implementation, and improvement). The Assessing Barriers to Data Demand and Use in the Health Sector Toolkit developed by the MEASURE Evaluation Project offers some key questions for understanding your project's use of data. These include:

- What decisions are made or need to be made?
- What information is needed to make these decisions?
- What data are available?
- How high-quality and/or useful are those data?
- How well are those data communicated within the organization?
- How often are those data used in making decisions? By whom?
- What capacity does your organization or project have for collecting, analyzing, and communicating new data?

STRATEGIES TO START OR STRENGTHEN YOUR USE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING THROUGHOUT YOUR PROJECT

Integrating adaptive learning requires several important activities relevant across the three stages of project work: design, implementation, and improvement. These strategies require time, interest, and buy-in of team members and leaders. For this reason, building a team primed for adaptive learning (see Unit 5) and modifying your environment to be supportive of adaptive learning (see Unit 4) are critical. Box 6.3 provides examples of strategies which can be used to inform and drive the adaptations often needed during project design and implementation to increase effectiveness and reach. These strategies are described within this unit.

BOX 6.3: STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO YOUR PROJECT

Stakeholder Engagement	Identify and engage key stakeholders within and outside of your organization. Stakeholders might include donors, community members, and implementing partners.
Learning Agenda	Develop a learning agenda that includes 1) a set of questions addressing critical knowledge gaps, 2) a set of associated activities to answer them, and 3) products aimed at disseminating findings and designed with usage and application in mind.[25]
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	Integrate a plan and a system designed to monitor and evaluate project implementation and outcomes to help identify where change is needed and where success should be spread. Particularly helpful approaches include context-aware monitoring and tracking key implementation outcomes such as acceptability, fidelity, and adoption.
Data Use	Use information to drive decision-making.

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[25] USAID Learning Lab. CLA Toolkit: Learning Agenda. https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/learning-agenda.

INCREASE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACROSS ALL STAGES OF THE PROJECT

Key stakeholders are an important, necessary source of information about the context in which the team is designing and implementing the project. Additionally, effectively engaging the community, relevant government officials, and other MOMENTUM stakeholders, such as funders, early in project design can build trust and increase local ownership of and buy-in for the work. During implementation, local stakeholders may be more likely to recognize and communicate early signs of success or provide input into understanding and addressing failure and/or contextual changes, providing crucial information for adapting or improving the project implementation (see Box 6.4).

To effectively engage stakeholders, MOMENTUM project teams should first conduct collaboration mapping to identify stakeholders and their levels of interaction and influence with the project.[26] This mapping will guide communication efforts to help ensure time and energy are invested strategically to cultivate key relationships. Communicate early and often with stakeholders, including sharing how information or guidance they provide is incorporated into project work (or why it is not incorporated). Knowledge of stakeholders' priorities will make meetings meaningful rather than routine and will help focus discussion on concrete decisions and important ideas to advance project work. USAID provides additional tools, tips, and resources on engaging stakeholders in the Learning Lab. A good resource is Engaging Stakeholders for Health Systems Strengthening. This guide provides information and tools that can be used to identify and engage stakeholders that are relevant to your project.

BOX 6.4: CASE STUDY

Combining Collaboration with Pause And Reflect Moments to Create New Learning Opportunities

USAID Learning Lab, How Collaborative Efforts Led to Better HIV Services and Outcomes in Eastern Uganda

In March 2018, the USAID Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services in Eastern Uganda (RHITES-E) Activity took part in the Ministry of Health's "surge strategy" for finding new HIV-positive patients and enrolling them in care and treatment. After a disappointing first quarter, the project pivoted to incorporate more local stakeholder engagement.

Because the eastern region of Uganda is diverse in both cultures and beliefs, RHITES-E teams began to work more closely with local health facility teams, with the project teams suggesting strategies for reaching underserved populations and health facility teams placing those strategies in local context and testing them for appropriateness. To facilitate this engagement, RHITES-E teams scheduled weekly pause and reflect moments with health facility teams, supported by the USAID surge dashboard, so that their efforts were grounded in the most recently available data.

Key Lessons

- Engage meaningfully with local stakeholders, collecting their expertise rather than just data.
- Plan and structure engagement carefully to achieve specific aims.

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[26] USAID Learning Lab and USAID/Rwanda. Collaboration Mapping. July 26, 2018. https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/collaboration-mapping.

DEVELOP A LEARNING AGENDA THAT EMBRACES ADAPTIVE LEARNING

A learning agenda is a set of questions, planned activities, and products that facilitate learning and decision-making within an organization, operating unit, or team.[27] This learning agenda is a plan for how a team or an organization will answer crucial questions or fill important knowledge gaps; that plan includes the questions or gaps to be "answered," the activities by which the team will answer those questions or gaps, and a series of outputs that will communicate or use those answers internally and externally, as appropriate. Box 6.5 provides instructions for preparing conventional learning agendas and describes slight adjustments to help integrate adaptive learning into the process and end product.

By developing a learning agenda (preferably early in the project design stage), a team commits not only to collecting information to fill important gaps in their understanding but also to using that information in the form of products or outputs. These outputs may be knowledge products (such as reports or manuscripts; see Unit 9: Communicating About Adaptive Learning), but they may also be adaptations or improvements to project work, such as implementing additional strategies learned from recent literature or from other awards. This learning agenda may also be used to identify gaps and needs for more systematic studies in the form of evaluation, implementation research, applied research, or development research. See Unit 2 (Understanding Adaptive Learning) for more resources and Box 2.4 for definitions.

Several efforts are taking place throughout the MOMENTUM suite of awards to contribute to learning across the awards. First, every MOMENTUM project and all field awards have a learning agenda. These are all contributing to MOMENTUM learning; by having common elements across awards, they can learn and adapt from one another. In addition, a MOMENTUM-wide learning agenda is being developed and implemented to help the overall suite of awards to pause, reflect, and review assumptions and approaches to improve project implementation. It is intended to be used by MOMENTUM core awards and country field awards to collaborate, learn, and adapt broadly, complementing award-specific learning agendas, as well as contribute to the global evidence base.

BOX 6.5: PREPARING LEARNING AGENDAS THAT INTEGRATE ADAPTIVE LEARNING

	Conventional Learning Agenda[28]	Learning Agenda With Adaptive Learning
Purpose	A learning agenda includes 1) a set of questions addressing critical knowledge gaps, 2) a set of associated activities to answer them, and 3) products aimed at disseminating findings and designed with usage and application in mind.	A learning agenda **also** includes questions that will recognize the inherent uncertainty of project work and will include mechanisms whereby the learning agenda is periodically reviewed and updated in collaboration between the project teams, organization leadership, and key stakeholders.
Development	Developed during the design phase of a strategy, project, or activity, after you have developed a results framework or development hypotheses. Engage in	A learning agenda developed during the design phase represents a hypothesis for the project strategy based upon current assumptions. A learning agenda should be expected to change

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	iterative, consultative processes with peers and external stakeholders to foster engagement and buy-in, enhance learning agenda relevance and use, and facilitate coordination and collaboration.	and evolve throughout the course of a project as new information becomes available and assumptions change. New questions, activities, and products should therefore **also** be developed during the implementation and MEL phases of the project.
Questions	Questions should be broad but directly related to the work and often organized thematically and prioritized by short and long term. When answered, these questions will enhance the team's ability to do work.	Questions should **also** cover areas where a causal link is unclear in the project's theory of change and contextual uncertainty or likelihood to change is greatest. Complexity-aware monitoring exemplifies how to structure questions around uncertainty.
Action plan	Learning agenda questions can be pursued through activities such as research, evaluations, literature reviews, project or portfolio reviews, and pause and reflect sessions.	Routine monitoring and evaluation systems and partner collaboration mechanisms such as working groups and learning networks are **also** used to explore/conduct existing and generate new learning agenda questions and activities.

DEVELOP A MONITORING EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN AND SYSTEM THAT INCORPORATES ADAPTIVE LEARNING

To incorporate adaptive learning into a project's MEL plan, the goal is to create a MEL system that embraces the concept of experimentation and learning rather than adherence to pre-defined outcomes and processes. Knowing what MEL information the project already collects and where and how it is accessible is a good start for integrating adaptive learning into project activities. For instance, building an Information Use Map,[29] which charts existing data-reporting channels, can identify opportunities for expanding the uses of those data for learning within the project cycle. Box 6.5 provides guidance for adjusting your existing MEL plan to integrate adaptive learning in each project stage.

BOX 6.6: STRATEGIES FOR USING YOUR MEL PLAN TO INTEGRATE ADAPTIVE LEARNING THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT CYCLE

Project Cycle	MEL Without Adaptive Learning	MEL With Adaptive Learning
Design	Theory of change, budgeting, and staffing plans are informed by prior evidence and adaptations based on an understanding of context as part of the pre-work for getting a project up and running.

MEL plans are focused on tracking processes and outcomes. | Project theory and infrastructure (resources and systems) are dynamic and provide explicit flexibility to evolve over the course of a project.

MEL plans are expanded to include the components of an Enabling Environment described in the CLA, including culture, processes, and resources. |

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[29] MEASURE Evaluation. *Tools for Data Demand and Use in the Health Sector.* 2011. file:///C:/Users/mivankovich/Downloads/ms-11-46.pdf.

Implementation	MEL plans are executed with fidelity to project designs and stakeholders are engaged according to routine policies and procedures (e.g., knowledge product dissemination, working groups).	During implementation, review of MEL plans and other emerging information is a priority and teams are supported through dedicated times including pause and reflect and other strategies to identify areas for improvement.
Measurement and Improvement	MEL results guide periodic project or portfolio reviews and development of new activities and provide a continuous flow of information that drives adaptive management and data for donor reporting.	MEL results guide periodic project or portfolio reviews and development of new activities and provide a continuous flow of information that drives adaptive management and data for donor reporting. In addition, the results lead to integration of problem exploration/diagnosis, design, test/retest, and adaptation methodologies continuously into project implementation. Stakeholder collaboration is integral to each of these processes.

To enhance the flexibility of MEL systems and to improve data use, MOMENTUM implementing organizations should focus on making the data approachable and usable by investing in user-friendly formats for data collection, analysis, and reporting. This strategy applies to both existing MEL systems and additional information collection approaches, such as collecting Most Significant Change Stories or Outcome Harvesting.[30] Strategies to improve data use within a project are built upon a robust MEL plan.

USE YOUR DATA

It is crucial to use the right evidence for the right purpose in the right way. All too often, monitoring and evaluation efforts are solely used to demonstrate that process and outcome targets are being met during a project timeframe. As a result, the information collected may be limited in scope, utility, or even format, and it may not be communicated back to project teams. While the continual monitoring of intervention outcomes is essential, formal MEL activities may occur too infrequently or have such a lengthy turnaround time that project teams cannot use the information gathered for real-time or near-time reflection and feedback. As the case study in Box 6.7 illustrates, opportunities to collect alternative information to supplement MEL systems can enhance efforts to understand context and outcomes to adapt project efforts and drive improvement.

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30   Moskal, Patsy, and Joel Hartman. *Adapting to Learn, Learning to Adapt.* Louisville, CO: ECAR. 2016. https://library.educause.edu/resources/2016/9/adapting-to-learn-learning-to-adapt.

BOX 6.7: CASE STUDY

Leveraging All Available Data During Project Implementation to Drive Continuous Improvement

USAID Learning Lab, Refining District-Level Interventions to Strengthen Health Systems in Bangladesh

The MaMoni Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Project (2013–2017) aimed to expand access to and use of integrated MNCH/FP/RH services by scaling up evidence-based practices, building upon previous project successes in Bangladesh.

MaMoni HSS collected a range of technical evidence to best understand how the project could maximize its impact. In addition to robust project MEL during the project's first year, the team conducted district-level situational analyses and analyzed Management Information Systems (MIS) data to better understand needs regarding health facilities, health workforce, and quality of health services. Together, the information collected from various sources was analyzed and used by the team to identify key differences in the types of support that were and were not needed in different target districts.

Key Lessons

- Identify what information is available already and how it can be used by project teams as well as what data needs to be made available (e.g., where are there gaps to fill).
- Build the analytical and critical thinking skills of project teams and their abilities to advocate for changes with internal and external stakeholders in order to make use of data to adapt and improve project work.

MOMENTUM project teams and implementing organizations should also create periodic learning opportunities, both structured and unstructured. One strategy for periodic data use for learning opportunities is a pause and reflect moment. A pause and reflect moment creates protected time to consider information that has been gathered and synthesized and the potential changes to project design and implementation that the information suggests. While teams often have regular meetings internally and with external stakeholders, these meetings are frequently focused on immediate concerns (such as whether targets are being met) with limited time for sharing and learning from failures. Pause and reflect moments can be scheduled as periodic reviews to assess progress, perhaps monthly or quarterly. They can also be triggered by new information or context changes that create new urgency for problem identification, problem prioritization, and solution development. The CLA Toolkit section on Facilitating Pause and Reflect offers approaches and tools for using this strategy during project design and implementation (see Useful Resources). Box 6.8 provides general content suggestions and additional tools for integrating this strategy into your project work.

BOX 6.8: POTENTIAL CONTENTS FOR A PAUSE AND REFLECT MEETING

- Celebrating Successes (should always be included in pause and reflect activities)
- Sharing Lessons Learned
- Peer-to-Peer Questions and Answers

Further Resources for Facilitating Pause and Reflect:

- Facilitating Pause and Reflect (USAID). This tool lists group-based and individual activities for pausing and reflecting along with further resources for facilitating those activities.
- Stopping to Think: Why It Pays to Pause and Reflect (USAID Podcast). This podcast describes the evidence for pausing and reflecting as well as ways to build it into project work.

USING THESE STRATEGIES TO INTEGRATE ADAPTIVE LEARNING AT EVERY PROJECT STAGE

There are opportunities to integrate adaptive learning at every stage of your project. You should begin by identifying times in which you already use adaptive learning practices and principles and build on those opportunities. Additionally, if possible, you can first try introducing or expanding your use of adaptive learning to opportunities that you think will be "easy wins" in order to increase buy-in and engagement from your team and more broadly.

INTEGRATING ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO PROJECT DESIGN

In designing a project or project activities, teams should identify what information is needed to determine interventions and project delivery, how progress will be monitored, and how challenges will be documented. In addition, they should identify where adaptive learning could be integrated during implementation.

Important strategies for doing this include identifying and engaging relevant MOMENTUM and external stakeholders (e.g., who will deliver and who will receive the intervention, who needs to be convinced of the importance of the intervention, and who has insights into factors that will affect acceptability and adoption) and other contextual factors such as the availability of local resources and previous stakeholder experiences. Getting insights from these stakeholders will increase the chance of the acceptability of the implementation as designed as well as provide relationships that should continue throughout implementation. Teams should also expect and plan that at least some of the baseline assumptions and theories of change are likely to evolve over the course of a project as new experience-based knowledge is gained during implementation. This fact underscores the importance of integrating adaptive learning and MEL plans and methods, such as complexity-aware monitoring, into project design.

INTEGRATING ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

During implementation, strategies to integrate adaptive learning include putting your MEL into action, building the analytical and critical thinking skills of team members, and providing the time and space for review of the data. These strategies will help you monitor project processes and help you understand early evidence of implementation outcomes (such as acceptability, adoption, fidelity). Teams should also monitor

changes in contextual factors that may require attention, such as loss of a provider or supply challenges at facilities, policy announcements or new projects, or changes in population health including disease outbreaks. To use new evidence or respond to contextual changes, teams should adopt strategies such as the pause and reflect to help them understand data emerging from their MEL system and openly identify challenges and celebrate successes.

INTEGRATING ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO PROJECT IMPROVEMENT

During improvement, teams need to utilize the information gathered and synthesized to date to make decisions and adapt the project for improved outcomes. To use adaptive learning, it is crucial that teams both have access to information and data necessary for learning <u>and</u> that teams use the information and data to understand where challenges may be arising to develop and test solutions. Strategies include pause and reflect, root cause analysis (tools provided in Unit 3), quality improvement methods and other rapid-cycle improvement approaches (see Box 6.9), and ongoing stakeholder engagement as discussed in this unit and in Unit 4.

BOX 6.9: USING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT METHODS

MOMENTUM objectives will not be achieved without improvements in the quality of health care delivery. Quality Improvement (QI) methods are team-based approaches to changing the processes and systems by which health care service delivery works for the better. In QI, teams seek to understand these processes and systems and the gaps and problems in their functioning (problem exploration), develop design solutions, and implement and test changes to the systems to learn if those changes result in improvements (test/retest). At the heart of QI methods is shared learning across the team and engagement with patients, communities, and other relevant stakeholders. The USAID ASSIST Project captured key learnings in 25 QI resources, including an improvement methods toolkit, a QI leadership guide, and multiple examples of QI in action around the world.

RESOURCES FOR INTEGRATING AND USING ADAPTIVE LEARNING THROUGHOUT YOUR PROJECT

Resource	Description	Link
Assessing Barriers to Data Demand and Use in the Health Sector: A Toolkit	A suite of tools developed by MEASURE Evaluation to help data users, producers, and policymakers understand the barriers that impede widespread data use in the health sector and develop action plans to address them.	https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/ms-18-134

Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) in Practice	This 12-part podcast series walks the listener through the PDIA approach to solving complex development problems.	https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/podcasts/pdia-in-practice
Evidence and Action in the Fast Lane	This microlearning seminar by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) shares practical solutions for using evidence to inform decision-making and discusses how to improve learning at your organization.	https://www.msh.org/news-events/events/evidence-action-in-the-fast-lane
Engaging Stakeholders for Health Systems Strengthening	This guide provides information and tools that can be used to identify and engage stakeholders relevant to your project. The Appendix provides criteria for choosing key stakeholders, templates for engagement planning, stakeholder engagement checklists, and stakeholder engagement indicators. During the project design phase, project managers and teams can use this guide to identify and properly engage stakeholders that are relevant to their projects. This will include communities with targeted health needs, the Ministry of Health (and other Ministries), donors, civil society organizations, and other implementing partners.	https://www.msh.org/sites/default/files/2015_08_msh_engaging_stakeholders_health_systems_strengthening.pdf
CLA Toolkit: Facilitating Pause and Reflect	This toolkit provides approaches and tools for pausing and reflecting at the individual and group levels during project design and implementation.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cla_toolkit_adaptive_management_faciltiating_pause_and_reflect_final_508.pdf
Tools for Creating Learning Agendas		
Learning (in the) Lab: A Utilization-Focused Learning Agenda Playbook	This guide provides tools and resources for project teams seeking to design and implement a learning agenda in their project.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/external_learning_in_the_lab_a_utilization-focused_learning_agenda_playbook_202001.pdf
Program Cycle Learning Agenda	This tool provides the framework for the USAID Program Cycle learning agenda.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/041018_pcla_pocket_guide_2c_lores_new.pdf
Tips for Creating a Learning Agenda	This tool provides useful tips for project teams seeking to create a learning agenda for their project.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/learning_agenda_tip_sheet_final.pdf

Learning Questions Tips Sheet	This tool provides useful tips for project teams seeking to write well-crafted learning questions for their learning agendas.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/learning_questions_tip_sheet.pdf
Learning Questions Checklist	This checklist provides project teams with a tool to assess the suitability of their learning questions.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/learning_questions_checklist_december_2018.pdf

UNIT 7: MONITORING, EVALUATING, AND LEARNING OF YOUR ADAPTIVE LEARNING
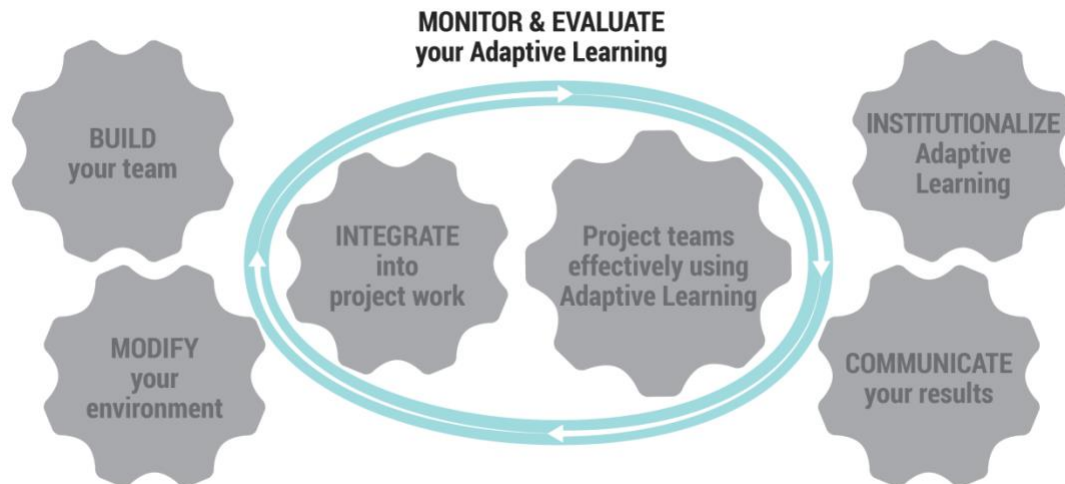
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Choose the right indicators and tools for your project to measure your work to strengthen and use adaptive learning and integrate them into existing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems.
- Understand how to utilize your adaptive learning MEL plan to monitor progress, evaluate opportunities for growth, and communicate your lessons learned with others.
- Identify appropriate resources to support and strengthen your use of MEL for adaptive learning.

INTRODUCTION

Just like any implementation effort or improvement initiative, increasing your MOMENTUM project's use of adaptive learning will require MEL of those efforts to ensure your work is achieving its goals and to identify areas where change is needed. Result 3 of the MOMENTUM Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework, *increased adaptive learning and use of evidence among host country technical leadership*, emphasizes the centrality of adaptive learning in achieving the shared vision of success for the awards. Teams at the project and activity levels need to monitor if and how adaptive learning processes have been introduced, are being used, and are having the intended results. These results will indicate where changes may be needed in your work to use and increase adaptive learning. They will also provide lessons for enhancing adaptive learning within a particular activity and more broadly within your project, for advocating for and sustaining adaptive learning internally and externally (Units 8 and 9), and for sharing lessons learned with other MOMENTUM projects or other MNCH/FP/RH implementing partners.

This unit focuses on how to integrate metrics into your MEL system to capture the use of adaptive learning processes and outcomes across the project cycle. A project's established MEL system forms the foundation to track and document use of adaptive learning but may not have the relevant indicators already identified. Unit 6 addresses how your MEL plan and systems can support adaptive learning. The Global Learning for Adaptive

Management (GLAM) initiative offers many useful resources on developing MEL systems that are embedded across and drive various components of adaptive projects. These resources include a comprehensive description of available MEL tools and approaches as well as an extensive reference library.

ASSESS THE CURRENT CAPACITY FOR MEL OF YOUR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

If you have completed one of the readiness assessments recommended in Unit 3 (Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning), those results will provide a starting point for understanding your current capacity for MEL of your adaptive learning. Regardless of whether you have conducted an assessment recommended in Unit 3, this unit provides detailed guidance and resources for understanding your current capacity and how to go about building upon your strengths while addressing gaps.

To determine how well your project's current MEL system captures the integration and use of adaptive learning, start by examining your indicators. MEL of your project's implementation and use of adaptive learning require a tailored set of indicators, some of which may already be in use. Box 7.1 provides illustrative examples of types of indicators, not time-bound. Note that these indicators reflect the full range of adaptive learning processes and include each component of your MOMENTUM award's logic model: internal and external determinants, processes and activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Map your existing indicators against this framework to determine which areas are already effectively covered and what additional indicators you will need to fill any gaps. Leverage existing indicators and standards, paying particular attention to ones that are adaptable to local context, such those provided by the Quality of Care Network. Reference those that are conceptually aligned with adaptive learning, such as QI measures. Another useful starting point may be existing indicators and standards, especially ones that lend themselves to adaptive MEL processes like QI, systems-based practice, or quality of care metrics. Like all indicators, those for adaptive learning should be Specific, Measurable (quantitatively or qualitatively), Achievable, Realistic (and Relevant), and Time-bound (SMART). MEASURE Evaluation provides a training resource for developing SMART indicators in M&E Fundamentals: A Self-Guided Minicourse. In addition, think about tools already being used to track implementation of your projects, such as pivot logs or process documentation (see Box 7.2), that can be leveraged to capture adaptive learning.

BOX 7.1: EXAMPLE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING

	Adaptable Organizational Environment	Receptive and Flexible Teams	Integration Into Project Cycles
Determinants	# of messages (e.g., emails, verbal announcements) whereby leaders create space and encourage the use of ongoing learning and adaptation practices	% of new employee recruitments that include assessments of critical thinking abilities	% of operational systems (e.g., finance and procurement, project implementation, and monitoring) that support and reinforce agency expectations of agility and adaptation

Activities/Processes	# of staff trainings on planning for and conducting pause andreflect moments during project implementation	# of training sessions or activities focused on adaptive learning practices	# of project monitoring indicators introduced to monitor the use of adaptive management
Outputs	% of work plan activities that identify periodic reviews and adaptation moments (i.e., pause and reflect points)	% of target staff reporting an improvement in capacity to use adaptive learning practices	% of staff that have access to a data system providing up-to-date information and knowledge
Outcomes	# of decisions made at decentralized levels, where appropriate, to support rapid and context-informed action	# of documented instances of evidence-informed adaptation in project management or implementation	% of early warning signals that triggered responses to context changes in real time

START OR STRENGTHEN MEL OF YOUR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Your MEL team should provide reliable, actionable insights for your project. As you collect monitoring data, you should assess the data itself. Are your data credible and free from bias? The Goldilocks Toolkit offers clear, concise guidance for assessing monitoring data.[31] Once you are confident in your data, you can use them to identify specific gaps in your use of adaptive learning, which can be explored and addressed using the causal analysis processes described in Unit 3. You should also identify strengths and successes on which you can build. MOMENTUM project leaders and activity managers need to drive this process, but all staff and stakeholders involved in use of adaptive learning should be involved. You should document all of this information and share it within your activity or project, throughout your organization, and with any external organizations that could benefit from your experience.

Add tools and indicators as needed so your project can assess the implementation of adaptive learning. Be sure to include qualitative observations from your staff, which can be captured with process documentation, pivot logs, or lessons learned logs (see Box 7.2). Target users of adaptive learning processes and practices should be encouraged to record their experiences: what works, what doesn't work, and what can be modified to improve the process. These qualitative observations are just as important as the traditional quantitative metrics captured with your array of indicators.

Box 7.2 contains tools that you can use to track and document your use of adaptive learning. Annotated run charts, process documentation, pivot logs, and lessons learned logs are all commonly used in other areas and

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[31] Gugerty, Mary K., Dean Karlan, and Delia Welsh. *Goldilocks Toolkit: Impact Measurement with the CART Principles*. Innovations for Poverty Action. 2016. http://www.poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/publications/Goldilocks-Toolkit-Impact-Measurement-with-CART-Principles_1.pdf.

are good options for MEL for adaptive learning. Of these, process documentation[32] may be the most useful, as it allows a great deal of flexibility for teams to choose the processes and events that are captured.

Process documentation systematically captures information related to the theory of change, organizes this information for stakeholder learning and reflection, and analyzes this information for common themes, trends, and patterns within the context of a particular project. Any or all team members can perform documentation. You should be specific in choosing the processes you want to capture and reflect in the MEL plan: for example, you can encourage teams to record the use of pause and reflect moments as an event, with perceptions of the utility of these moments in the notes and reflections in meeting minutes. A process documentation planning template is available in Annex 1 of the International Rescue Committee International Water and Sanitation Centre occasional paper, *Documenting Change: An Introduction to Process Documentation.*[33]

Pivot logs,[34] also known as change logs, may also be useful. Because pivot logs capture significant changes in a project's activities along with the reason for the change, they are a powerful option for recording the impact of adaptive learning. We recommend the pivot log template developed by USAID for the CLA Toolkit, which captures the date, what changed, reason for the change, and any additional comments from the logger or project team. For example, your project might change strategies based on new knowledge thanks to the adaptive learning plan. You can capture this success in a pivot log, allowing it to be celebrated and spread. Additional practical guidance on the use of process documentation and pivot logs can be found in the USAID Learning (in the) Lab playbook.[35]

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[32] da Silva Wells, Carmen, Ewen Le Borgne, Nick Dickinson, and Dick de Jong. *Documenting Change: An Introduction to Process Documentation*. The Hague: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre. 2011. https://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/47_op_documenting_change_introduction_process_documentation_2011_0.pdf.

[33] da Silva Wells et al. "*Documenting Change: An Introduction to Process Documentation*."

[34] USAID Learning Lab. Pivot Log Template. 2018. https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/pivot-log-template.

[35] Baker, Matthew, Shannon Griswold, and Jessica Lucas. *Learning (in the) Lab: A Utilization-Focused Learning Agenda Playbook*. Abridged External Version. Jan. 2020. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/external_learning_in_the_lab_a_utilization-focused_learning_agenda_playbook_202001.pdf.

BOX 7.2: TOOLS FOR MONITORING AND DOCUMENTING USE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING

- Process Documentation: A systematic approach for tracking meaningful events in a project to capture the "what, how, and why" of these events. Documents can capture specific events, such as pause and reflect moments, as well as notes and reflections on those events. Compilation and analysis of these documents can provide qualitative data on the successes and areas for improvement of your adaptive learning.[i]

- Pivot Logs: A tool to capture strategy changes made in the course of an activity or project. Because this tool captures the reasons for "pivoting," or making a change, it can provide key data on the ways projects are using adaptive learning.[ii, iii]

- Lessons Learned Logs: A tool for capturing and sharing successes and failures from a project. Although this tool is designed for quality improvement, it can easily be adapted to evaluate efforts to implement adaptive learning.[iv]

- Annotated Run Charts: These are tools commonly used in quality improvement. They can help teams understand if the project is responding to data changes in design and testing. They are used to plot results of specific performance measures over time and can be used to assess if particular changes made during project implementation are effective. This run chart template provided to members of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement can be used by projects or organizations to plot annotated run charts for adaptations during project implementation, documenting that adaptive learning is happening.[v]

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[i]   University Research Co., LLC. Quality Improvement. 2019. https://www.urc-chs.com/quality-improvement.

[ii]   USAID Learning Lab. Learning. https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-component/learning.

[iii] USAID Learning Lab. CLA Toolkit: Understanding CLA. https://usaidlearninglab.org/qrg/understanding-cla-0.

[iv]   Turas | Learn. Lessons Learned Log. 2020. https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/3401/quality-improvement-zone/qi-tools/lessons-learned-log.

[v]   IHI. Tools: Run Chart Tool. http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/Tools/RunChart.aspx.

The case study in Box 7.3 illustrates the utility of MEL for adaptive learning during the Ebola epidemic in Liberia. Note that Mercy Corps was able to identify the failure of their adaptive learning system and evaluate the causes of this failure. They utilized this information to act, designing an improved learning system for future use.

BOX 7.3: CASE STUDY

Leveraging MEL to Adapt Program Strategy and Systems

Mercy Corps ADAPT, Promoting Partner Autonomy and Learning to Fight Ebola in Liberia[i]

Mercy Corps' Ebola Community Action Platform (ECAP) launched in October 2014, just after the peak of the epidemic in Liberia. ECAP was an ambitious social mobilization program that aimed to raise localized awareness and promote information sharing on Ebola with the ambitious goal of reaching two million people in six months. Central to the ECAP approach was a technology-intensive learning platform designed to improve partner organizations' mobilization activities. The platform relied on 1,000 mobile devices, which were to be used to report on mobilization activities as well as knowledge, attitudes, and practices in local communities. These data fed into an online dashboard and informed a variety of workshops hosted by Mercy Corps.

MEL of this technology-heavy learning system revealed several difficulties in its implementation. Mercy Corps measured usage of the system by partner organizations: according to a key indicator, only 18 of 24 were accessing the system, falling far short of their standards. Using core concepts of adaptive learning, they explored reasons why processes were not working. They identified several factors leading to low-volume use. Integrating the system was too resource-intensive for partner organizations, particularly in a short-term emergency program. Senior leadership also did not have time to provide guidance on how and why learning from the data system could be used to improve the program, leading to limited uptake in the field.

Responding to this new information, Mercy Corps designed a leaner, more efficient learning system, ECAP2, which was better able to meet the needs of their stakeholders. They improved usability of the interface by including data on individual communities, which can now be viewed longitudinally. They also focused on improving data quality by dedicating a single staff person in each partner organization to data collection.

Key Lessons

- MEL embedded across project design, implementation, and improvement enables the continuous improvement of project strategy and activities.

- Traditional MEL identifies implementation challenges, but MEL for adaptive learning can identify how quickly the team identifies a problem and adapts to positive effect.

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[i]   MercyCorps. *ADAPT Case Study: Promoting Partner Autonomy and Learning to Fight Ebola in Liberia.* 2016. https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/ADAPT%20Liberia%20case%20study_0.pdf.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR MEL OF YOUR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

MOMENTUM Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework	This framework describes MOMENTUM's M&E, learning, and adaption, including the theory of change, learning agenda questions and specific indicators, and approaches to data collection, analysis/synthesis, and dissemination.	https://km.usaidmomentum.org/toolbox/resources/cross-momentum-monitoring-evaluation-and-learning-framework
Knowledge Management Indicator Library	This Global Health Knowledge Collaborative resource contains a large number of indicators for knowledge management (KM) and associated processes, many of which are applicable to MEL of adaptive learning.	https://indicators.globalhealthknowledge.org/
Documenting Change: An Introduction to Process Documentation	A clear, detailed introduction to process documentation, including a number of additional resources.	https://www.weadapt.org/sites/weadapt.org/files/legacy-new/knowledge-base/files/5555ee465f829documenting-change-how-to-do-it.pdf
Pivot Log Template	USAID's general template for constructing a pivot log.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/pivot-log-template
Learning (in the) Lab Playbook: A Utilization-Focused Learning Agenda Playbook	This USAID resource contains concise information on process documentation and pivot logs as well as general guidance for MEL.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/external_learning_in_the_lab_a_utilization-focused_learning_agenda_playbook_202001.pdf
Lessons Learned Log	TURAS Quality Improvement Zone's clear, concise introduction to using a lessons learned log.	https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/3401/quality-improvement-zone/qi-tools/lessons-learned-log#:~:text=Lessons%20Learned%20Logs%20are%20used,from%20the%20project%20team's%20experience.
Goldilocks Toolkit	General resources for starting or strengthening a MEL program.	https://www.poverty-action.org/right-fit-evidence/toolkit
Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) Initiative	A variety of resources including toolkits for strengthening MEL programs for adaptive management.	https://www.odi.org/projects/2918-global-learning-adaptive-management-initiative-glam
Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) Reference Library	An extensive reference library including a broad array of resources for MEL programs.	https://www.zotero.org/groups/1265281/adaptive_development/collections/2SP63NK2

BetterEvaluation	A global community to create, share, and support use of knowledge about how to better plan, manage, conduct, and use evaluation.	https://betterevaluation.org

UNIT 8: INSTITUTIONALIZING ADAPTIVE LEARNING AS THE NORM
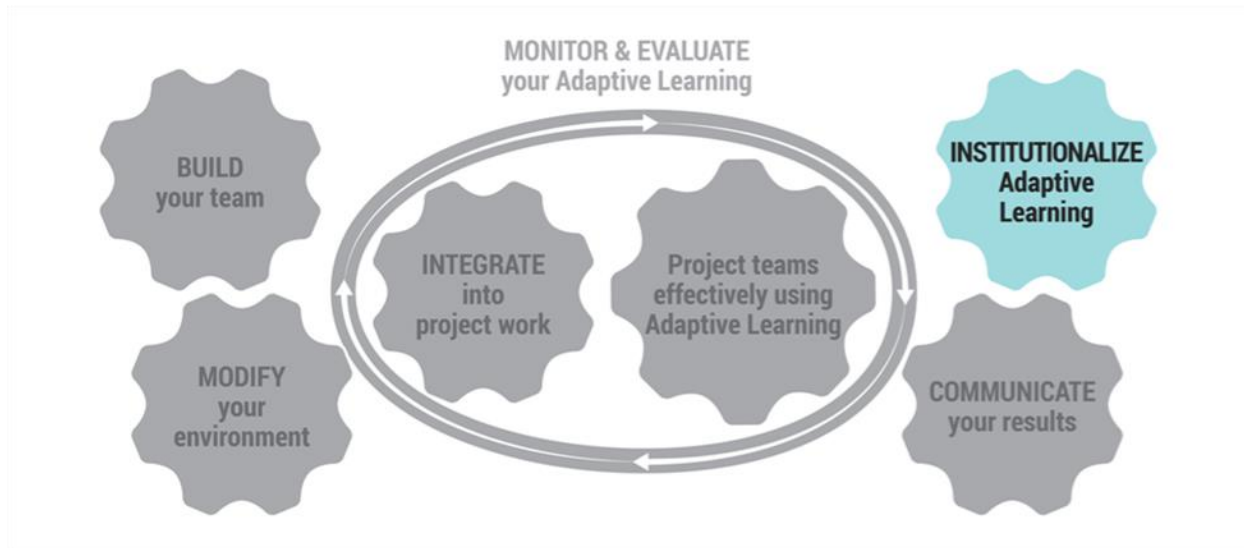
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the need to institutionalize adaptive learning in a project and in an implementing organization.
- Understand specific strategies for institutionalizing adaptive learning.
- Identify further resources for institutionalizing adaptive learning.

INTRODUCTION

To ensure that your project and organization benefit from use of adaptive learning, you should ensure that adaptive learning is more than a one-time effort. Making adaptive learning principles and practices an everyday activity that permeates your implementing organization—"institutionalizing" adaptive learning—is a crucial part of integrating adaptive learning into your work and requires consistently providing your teams with the OAM to use adaptive learning.

BOX 8.1: DEFINITIONS

Opportunity	Environmental or contextual factors beyond an individual's control that can block or facilitate adaptive learning: • Leadership support for adaptive learning. • "Protected" time for performing adaptive learning strategies. • Flexible budgeting.
Ability	Individual- and team-level factors—usually concerning skills and knowledge—that can block or facilitate adaptive learning.

	• Understanding how to use data from adaptive learning to improve project work. • Knowing how to engage local stakeholders to gather relevant contextual information. • Supportive supervision and role modeling for adaptive learning.
Motivation	Factors related to individuals' or teams' interest in or internal beliefs about adaptive learning that can block or facilitate it. • Belief in the relevance of adaptive learning for project or program design, implementation, and improvement. • Perception that the team has the time to pursue adaptive learning in its day-to-day work.

All definitions adapted from the WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist Implementation Guide.

ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES

If you have completed one of the readiness assessments recommended in Unit 3 (Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning), those results will provide a starting point for understanding your current strengths and gaps for institutionalizing adaptive learning within your project and organization. Regardless of whether you completed a readiness assessment already or which one you completed, the information and tools of the USAID CLA Maturity Spectrum are integrated into this unit to provide more detailed guidance on the institutionalization of adaptive learning. The maturity guide includes a rubric defining what various subcomponents look like at various stages of integration into an organization: Not Yet Present, Emergent, Expanding, Advanced, or Institutionalized. Subcomponents that are not yet "Institutionalized" can be started or strengthened by referring to the relevant unit for specific strategies. Any subcomponents that are close to or fully "Institutionalized" may benefit from the strategies in this unit, which are meant to foster an implementing organization's sustainability of the subcomponents.

BOX 8.2: ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE, ADAPTED FROM THE USAID CLA MATURITY SPECTRUM

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT—Organizational Culture: Openness				
Not Yet Present	**Emergent**	**Expanding**	**Advanced**	**Institutionalized**
Openness to sharing and hearing alternative perspectives or trying novel approaches is not yet part of organizational culture.	**Only certain individuals**: • Ask difficult questions or feel able to express unpopular viewpoints. • Invite alternative perspectives. • Are willing to explore untested or novel ideas.	**Minority of organization staff**: • Ask difficult questions or feel able to express unpopular viewpoints. • Invite alternative perspectives. • Are willing to explore untested or novel ideas.	**Majority of organization staff**: • Ask difficult questions or feel able to express unpopular viewpoints. • Invite alternative perspectives. • Are willing to explore untested or novel ideas.	**Staff organization-wide, with support of organizational leadership, consistently**: • Ask difficult questions or feel able to express unpopular viewpoints. • Invite alternative perspectives. • Are willing to explore untested or novel ideas.

The Maturity Spectrum provides detailed descriptions for each stage of the spectrum for every CLA subcomponent. For "Culture: Openness," for example, the stages depend on how widespread key behaviors (such as asking difficult questions or inviting alternative perspectives) are in your team or organization. If only a few members of your team or organization perform these behaviors, then "Openness" is an area you should work on strengthening and institutionalizing principles and practices to better integrate adaptive learning. If everyone performs these behaviors consistently, then "Openness" is a strength of your team or organization you can build on as you integrate adaptive learning into your work.

STARTING OR STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING AT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Other units in this guide offer specific strategies for starting or strengthening various types of opportunity, ability, and motivation factors. For instance, Unit 4 (Modifying Your Environment to Integrate or Strengthen Adaptive Learning) discusses opportunity and motivation factors, such as rigid funding structures that keep teams from learning about and adapting to changing context and information and thus represent an opportunity gap or block. Organizational culture factors such as an individual's or team's belief in the importance of adaptive learning for project work can be motivation-related facilitators.

Here we focus on strategies for starting or strengthening the institutionalization of the adaptive learning principles and practices discussed in other units. One approach is to repeat the assessment to identify where you have progressed from when you started your journey. Some areas may already be incorporated into your systems and cultures, while others may still be weak or in need of steps to ensure they are sustained.

ADDRESS OPPORTUNITY FACTORS FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Institutionalizing opportunity facilitators can mean standardizing work processes and systems to better support adaptive learning. For instance, if your team develops a new, more flexible way of working with a particular donor in order to support their use of adaptive learning (see Unit 4), you could try to standardize part or all of that new method in future work with that donor or even with additional donors. Similarly, when your team first identifies key decision points in project work and implements pause and reflect moments to address them, they can begin to institutionalize this practice by recording those decision moments, identifying the data or information used to make the decision, and creating a standard agenda for pause and reflect meetings.

Additionally, it is important to understand how various stakeholders inside and outside your organization are affected by the integration of adaptive learning into your work and to engage those stakeholders to gain their support for adaptive learning. See Unit 6 for more information on stakeholder and collaboration mapping. For instance, managers must be open to teams learning and adapting from successes, failures, and changing context even though this learning and adapting may take additional time. Engaging with managers and offering them strategies for balancing flexible timelines with maintaining accountability for the work can increase buy-in from management, thereby strengthening institutionalization. Similarly, making certain teams are aware of the balance of flexibility and accountability that will allow them to integrate adaptive learning makes it more likely they will use those practices. Other stakeholders you will want to consider include (but are not limited to) donors, government officials, collaborating partners, organizational leadership, and other internal teams.

Integrating adaptive learning into your work can improve the design, implementation, and improvement of projects. However, adaptive learning frequently requires more resources: budgeted time, staff attention, and financial resources. As you institutionalize adaptive learning in your organization, you should also make certain these resources are available by seeking flexible arrangements with donors or writing adaptive learning into funding requests explicitly (see Unit 4 for more strategies related to financial and operational structures).

ADDRESS ABILITY FACTORS FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Institutionalizing ability for adaptive learning can mean standardizing knowledge and skills across your MOMENTUM project. One strategy is to provide training on adaptive learning to everyone in the organization, regardless of position. This widespread training provides a shared language for all project staff to discuss and understand how adaptive learning integrates into project work and increases both understanding and buy-in for the concept. For instance, the Xerox Company trained all their employees in a specific problem-solving method and provided them with tools for using it. Because everyone in the company understood how to use the method, it was easier to apply to problems during work.

One way that changes can be sustained is by investing in key people and networks to encourage that change or by spreading existing expertise throughout the organization. For instance, at the end of a project, you may take a team that integrated adaptive learning well and distribute the members to other teams in order to help those other teams better integrate adaptive learning. For example, when the Copeland Corporation (a manufacturer of compressors) built a highly successful new kind of factory, they spread the now-experienced design and building team among the teams building the next four factories of the same kind to ensure that the lessons learned in the process of building the first factory were not lost.

## ADDRESS MOTIVATION FACTORS FOR ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Within MOMENTUM, institutionalizing motivation facilitators for adaptive learning can mean building the project-wide expectation that it should be used at every opportunity. In the Xerox Company example above, the company used modeling by leadership, repeated team-based training, and common tools to ensure that their problem-solving method would be used by everyone every time they faced a problem in a meeting. Even when the organization convened a high-level working group to reconsider Xerox's organizational structure, they used the standard problem-solving method.

Another way of institutionalizing motivation facilitators is to use the physical space in which teams work to make adaptive learning activities part of everyday work. For example, at Mercy Corps, teams post physical cues from and about adaptive learning, such as results chains and graphical representations of learning goals around the office. Similarly, open office spaces—or simply open office doors—can help institutionalize an organizational culture of openness and sharing information.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR INSTITUTIONALIZING ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Resource	Description	Link
CLA Maturity Spectrum	This USAID tool includes a rubric defining what various subcomponents look like at various stages of integration into an organization: Not Yet Present, Emergent, Expanding, Advanced, or Institutionalized.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cla_maturity_spectrum_handouts_20170612_0.pdf
Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) in Practice	This 12-part podcast series walks the listener through the PDIA approach to solving complex development problems.	https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/podcasts/pdia-in-practice
KM and Adaptive Learning Microcourse	A self-directed course that can be used as a refresher course for knowledge management and adaptive learning, a supplement to more comprehensive learning options, and an engagement tool for partners, collaborators, and decisionmakers.	https://leadernet.org/km-and-adaptive-learning-microcourse/
"How Do You Incentivize Good Adaptive Management?"	A blog post from the Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) initiative describing the importance of incentives, leadership, and institutions to promote experimentation and evidence-based adaptation. The post links to many related tools and resources.	https://medium.com/glam-blog/how-do-you-incentivise-good-adaptive-management-13bd55e4b322

UNIT 9: COMMUNICATING ABOUT ADAPTIVE LEARNING
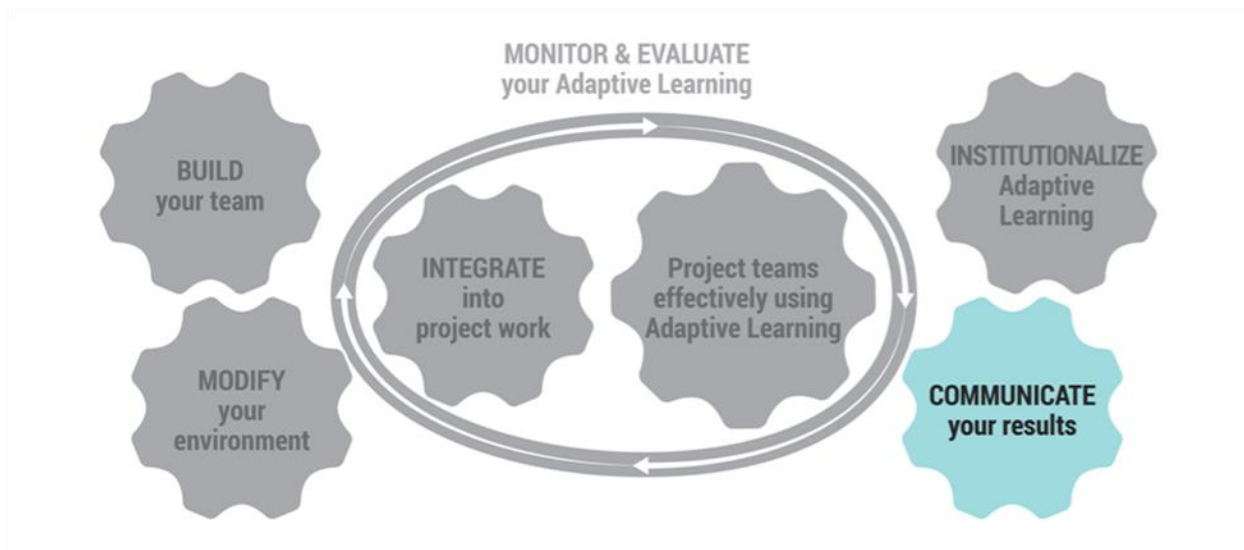
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand how to leverage your projects' communications strategy and plans to educate internal and external audiences of the importance of using adaptive learning in your work.

- Understand how to use communication techniques to inform internal and external audiences of the results of your adaptive learning strategies throughout project design, implementation, and improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Successfully integrating adaptive learning into your work may require the engagement and support of many different stakeholders, both inside and outside your project. Engaging these stakeholders requires communicating with them about adaptive learning—how it works, its value to your project, and your progress and successes with it. This communication will help reinforce CLA principles and practices that are critical components of MOMENTUM's results framework and prominent in the MOMENTUM theory of change, making them highly visible to USAID and relevant to how MOMENTUM is defining progress.

- **Project Leaders and Activity Managers:** It is vital that your project's leadership and activity managers buy into the use of adaptive learning in your work. Leaders and managers can facilitate the integration of adaptive learning by supporting the development and empowerment of teams using adaptive learning (Unit 4). To achieve this goal, you need to communicate about adaptive learning to these leaders and managers. Through ongoing communication about the use of adaptive learning with your project's leadership and management, you can help ensure that adaptive learning is accepted and encouraged throughout the project and the organization, which will promote its institutionalization (see Unit 8).

- **Other Team and Staff Members:** You need to communicate as well with other teams and staff members so that they will understand what to expect from your team as you integrate adaptive

learning into your work and what to expect from the project to facilitate adaptive learning.

For instance, using adaptive learning practices may affect your team's timelines and budgets as you take more time to learn from and adapt your work to new information. Other teams and staff members need to understand and support these changes.

Similarly, if leadership and management begin to shift the environment and culture of the MOMENTUM project to embrace adaptive learning, other teams and staff members will need to buy-in to that change. As the culture becomes more open to learning from both successes and failures, staff will need to understand and trust in the change to engage in adaptive learning fully.

- **External Stakeholders:** Stakeholders outside your project, such as funders, government officials, and other collaborators, can also have a significant impact on your project's use of adaptive learning. Funders can facilitate its integration by embracing adaptive learning practices in funding proposals and developing more flexible funding mechanisms.

  For instance, as you take more time to learn from and adapt your work to new information, you may need additional time and resources. It is essential to communicate to funders and others that, although adaptive learning may increase costs or time, it will also increase successful outcomes.

ASSESSING YOUR READINESS TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Communicating about adaptive learning can be challenging. Finding examples of how your MOMENTUM project is already adapting and communicating about adaptive learning and other similar work—such as quality improvement, program monitoring or process evaluation results—to whom, and how can be a powerful ingredient for communicating the value of adaptive learning and accelerating this task. This work should build on internal communication plans and the MOMENTUM-wide communications strategy.

If you have completed one of the readiness assessments recommended in Unit 3 (Assessing Strengths and Gaps for Adaptive Learning), those results will provide a starting point for understanding your current capacity for communicating about adaptive learning. If you have not yet done an assessment, MEASURE Evaluation Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit (MECAT) is an excellent place to start.

Consider what methods of communication you already use in your project or team.

- Which do you use internally?
- Which ones do you use with different external stakeholders?
- Are any of those methods successful, and can you adapt those successful methods to communicate about adaptive learning?
- Have you successfully communicated about a new initiative or a new approach previously, and can you build on that communication method?

Building on existing communication channels, such as newsletters and working groups, is consistent from stakeholders' perspectives and a more efficient use of resources than setting up new channels to discuss adaptive learning.

Adaptive Learning is central to MOMENTUM communications and learning. Many factors in your MOMENTUM project environment may affect your ability to communicate about adaptive learning. For instance, does your project have rigid management structures that silo communication efforts? Are you working in an open, collaborative team or organizational culture that is conducive to open communications? Is there interest and openness about discussing and learning from challenges? For more on modifying your environment for adaptive learning, see Unit 4.

START OR STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNICATION ABOUT ADAPTIVE LEARNING

LEVERAGE YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND PLANS

You should incorporate your approach to communicating about adaptive learning into the existing MOMENTUM communication strategy and your project's unique communication plans. The MOMENTUM communication strategy guides messaging and sharing project information with external audiences and USAID. The strategy covers MOMENTUM:

- Strategic communication goals and objectives.
- Primary and secondary audiences.
- Key external communication messages and themes that align with MOMENTUM's learning questions.
- Communication tactics and channels.
- Communication monitoring and evaluation.

Your project's communication plan about Adaptive Learning may cover both internal and external audiences and provide more specific instructions on what information to provide and how.

Box 9.1 below captures one simple approach to reviewing and updating your communication plan to include information, results, and changes from your adaptive learning to stakeholders (adapted from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Adaptive Management Guide).

BOX 9.1: PLANNING TO COMMUNICATE RESULTS AND CHANGES TO STAKEHOLDERS

Audience	Purpose/Desired Outcome	Key Information to Share	Communication Approach
List the key stakeholders with whom you would like to share the information collected through adaptive learning.	Describe the purpose and specific outcome for communicating to each key audience (e.g., share new decisions or solicit feedback on a change in program plans).	Identify: 1. What information is important for them to know? 2. What information will inspire them to support your desired outcome?	Determine the approach you will use to share this information (e.g., memo or brief, meeting, email, etc.).

USE THE APPROPRIATE FORMATS AND CHANNELS FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER

One strategy for identifying stakeholders with whom you should communicate about adaptive learning is to perform a stakeholder analysis or mapping activity (adapted from slides 34-37 in Learning (in the) Lab). List all MOMENTUM stakeholders—both internal and external—who may affect (or be affected by) the project's use of adaptive learning. For example, are they funders who may experience delays and missed deadlines? Are they project staff who may only be familiar with more rigid, limited measurement and evaluation efforts? The MOMENTUM Knowledge Management Plan provides external/internal audience profiles to help tailor messaging.

Next, determine the role each stakeholder must play for adaptive learning to be successful. Use the results to inform your communication approaches as you move forward with integrating or strengthening adaptive learning in your project work. The CLA Toolkit also provides additional resources and suggestions for analyzing and engaging stakeholders.

BOX 9.2: CASE STUDY

Communication Facilitates Stakeholder Collaboration and Use of Adaptive Learning

Mercy Corps, *Ensuring Contextual Awareness and Flexible Partnership in South and Central Syria*

Since 2014, the Mercy Corps South and Central Syria (SCS) program has operated outside Syria due to the Syrian civil war. In order to continue providing food assistance, non-food items, water/sanitation/hygiene assistance, livelihood support, and other aid, SCS has worked with in-country partners, including more informal local networks of activists and volunteers. Working with such a range of partners has required SCS to develop flexible compliance procedures that are responsive to contextual nuance. For instance, Mercy Corps' standard procedure of requiring partners to collect three quotes for certain procurements was often not feasible in the context because of limited suppliers and risks of government retaliation from transferring documentation. As a result, SCS finance teams developed a robust matrix of potential supporting documentation by which they could evaluate the procurement efforts of in-country partners and have conversations about the feasibility of documentation requirements.

SCS supported these new, flexible compliance procedures with **robust internal and external communication strategies**. Internally, SCS shifted from one-off trainings to regular coaching, facilitation support, and peer meetings to help in-country partners improve their compliance practices (which partners have found more effective) and understanding of the processes for improvement. Externally, SCS built trust in this new flexible approach by spreading awareness of the adaptive approach within Mercy Corps' headquarters and among donors. By communicating about their adaptive approaches with these stakeholders, SCS has ensured that their team has the authority to make contextually appropriate decisions about compliance activities for in-country partners.

Not all formats or channels work for all audiences. Once you have identified the stakeholders you intend to communicate with, match your communication approach to your intended audience based on the information you need to convey and the channel preferences of that audience. Box 9.3 provides examples of formats and channels for internal and external audiences, but this list of options is by no means exhaustive. Within MOMENTUM, the Knowledge Management Platform, external USAID MOMENTUM website, MOMENTUM social media, and the USAID Learning Lab are all potential channels for communications about adaptive learning.

BOX 9.3: SELECT FORMATS AND CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT ADAPTIVE LEARNING

	Examples of Communication Formats (how)	**Examples of Communication Channels (when)**
Internal	- Data feedback and visualization Presentations - Stories (of successes/failures) - Posters - Guidelines/Instructions	- Regular project or team meetings - Coaching and supervision - Other internal communication such as newsletters or updates - Email
External	- Case Studies - Reports and presentations - Policy Papers - Infographics - Webinars - Presentations, Demonstrations	- Routine project or external stakeholder - community gatherings - Meetings - Learning exchanges - Websites - Blogs - Social Media

Adapted from USAID's Landscape Analysis of Learning Agendas.

BUILD COMMUNICATION ABOUT ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTO EXISTING PROCESSES

To ensure that communication about adaptive learning happens regularly, build it into reoccurring meeting agendas, such as those with management and other teams and staff members.

Within MOMENTUM, this could occur during regular working group meetings to take advantage of MOMENTUM-wide representation. These working groups include the MOMENTUM Knowledge Management Working Group, the Strategic Communications Working Group, and the Monitoring, Evaluation, Innovation, and Learning Working Group. The USAID Learning Lab regularly collects and publishes case studies to recognize the application of CLA principles, including adaptive learning.

You might also use your project's intranet or messaging platform. For instance, the MOMENTUM Knowledge Management Platform (internal) and the public MOMENTUM website are excellent places to communicate the use and results of adaptive learning to others in your organization and across the suite. Consider using visual representations of adaptive learning processes and results to help people understand the approach taken and communicate its impact.

Box 9.4 provides examples of strategies for integrating continuous communication into your adaptive learning processes.

BOX 9.4: BUILDING CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION INTO ADAPTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES

Element of Adaptive Learning	Communication Priority	Potential Communication Strategy
Building Your Team	• Get leadership buy-in for team composition and support • Align the team around the meaning and importance of adaptive learning • Establish agreed-upon communication strategies for the team internally across the project and externally	• Develop simple tools for defining adaptive learning and team roles • Tell institutional "success stories" via internal newsletters or all-hands meetings • Create communication standard operating procedures, or a brief template, to help the team communicate information about adaptive learning in a consistent way
Integration Into Project Work	• Create dedicated tools and moments to capture and reflect on the project's use of adaptive learning • Provide a systematic approach for team members to sharing new information that may drive changes in project implementation • Begin celebrating adaptive learning use and discussing challenges	• Develop meeting minute templates and project dashboards that capture team learning • Identify opportunities in routine project meetings to communicate about the use of adaptive learning within the teams • Create visuals that can be used to illustrate processes, changes in processes, and successes
Monitoring & Evaluation	• Provide visibility and accountability into how your project will monitor	• Include adaptive learning indicators in the internal project MEL

	and evaluate its use of adaptive learning	framework and the donor reporting MEL framework
		• Identify reports in which successes in process or outcomes using adaptive learning can be highlighted, understood, and communicated
Institutionalization	• Use communication tools to engage leadership in the process (or secure leadership buy-in) • Reinforce a culture of adaptive learning and build credibility in how its use drives positive results for the project	• Organize a kick-off meeting that builds organizational buy-in • Use pause and reflect moments at the organizational level to reflect on and emphasize successful use of adaptive learning practices

Tailor messages so that they build upon motivators and opportunities for buy-in. The OAM framework described in Unit 8 provides additional information for structuring communication to affect behavior change. Additionally, you can build communication about the value of adaptive learning and your successes with it into meetings and events with stakeholders outside your project, such as funders and other collaborators.

The case study in Box 9.5 illustrates how communicating the results of adaptive learning can drive both internal project improvements and more effective external collaboration.

BOX 9.5: CASE STUDY

Communicating the Use and Outcomes of Adaptive Learning Supports Uptake of Principles and Practices Amongst External Stakeholders

IRC, *Leveraging an Informant Network for Rapid Relief Response in Diffa, Niger*

Since 2013, the IRC has had an evolving portfolio of work in Diffa, Niger, where more than 200,000 refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons needed support. As part of its work, the IRC established an informant network to monitor and protect the fluctuating population. Initially, they had seven monitors for 81 sites, but as the number of sites hosting displaced persons grew, they had to re-evaluate the approach. As a result, they established "focal points," individual citizens with IRC-provided phones located wherever displaced people were already present or likely to arrive. The citizens used these phones to rapidly inform the IRC's field team and senior management about population movements, such as the 10,000 newly arrived people on the islands in Lake Chad in March 2014. The IRC used the local information network to more formally assess the population and respond to its food, non-food, health, and sanitation needs.

The IRC supports a learning atmosphere by holding daily briefings in its field office to dispel rumors and foster open communication among staff. Additionally, the IRC communicates the results of its learning from its network through weekly (and later, daily) reports and multi-sector assessments to other humanitarian agencies. These methods and formal and informal communication channels have helped set the humanitarian agenda in Diffa with key stakeholders (e.g., United Nations agencies and donors) and advocate for a flexible and adaptive response. Open communication and inclusion of adaptive learning examples has allowed the IRC to renegotiate work and contracts and secure new funding to meet emerging needs. In more than one instance, the IRC has prompted a local response from another non-governmental organization by sharing information.

Key Lessons

- Communicating about the IRC's learnings about local population movements from its local network of informants allowed the IRC to pursue its work using more adaptive and responsive methods.

- Communicating IRC's learning results to other NGOs and donors influenced the local humanitarian agenda to be more flexible, adaptive, and responsive to rapidly evolving context.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS STORIES TO SHOW THE VALUE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Convincing stakeholders to support the integration of adaptive learning into your work requires using persuasive communication methods. Telling stories (or more formally, writing case studies) of adaptive learning successes can sometimes communicate the value of adaptive learning more persuasively than a report or data. Include plenty of relevant detail to "bring the story to life" and ensure your audience understands why adaptive learning is important. While not usually required, for some stakeholders and situations, the rigor of evidence from more systematic evaluation or research will generate the data to tell a more compelling story and further encourage others to build on your success.

We are increasingly working in an information-saturated virtual environment where your communication efforts may be competing for the limited attention span of your audiences. Remember that communication and advocacy is not a one-time activity. Awareness and consensus of the

The Importance of Leadership[i]

Leadership plays an essential role to encourage and reinforce adaptive learning by communicating success within the organization and with external stakeholders.

- Use media and interpersonal communication to promote the work of specific improvement teams.

- Highlight successful innovations in staff newsletters and in staff and board meetings.

- Reinforce the importance of the project by sitting in on improvement team meetings or visiting the practice site or unit involved in the project.

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[i]   AHRQ. Section 4: Ways to Approach the Quality Improvement Process (Page 1 of 2). Content last reviewed Jan. 2020. https://www.ahrq.gov/cahps/quality-improvement/improvement-guide/4-approach-qi-process/index.html.

value of adaptive learning does not always translate into adoption or action. Communication and advocacy efforts thus must be reinforced over time.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATING AND ADVOCATING YOUR USE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING

Resource	Description	Link
MOMENTUM Strategic Communication Plan	This MOMENTUM resource outlines the suite of award's strategic communication goals and objectives, audiences, channels, tactics, and monitoring activities.	Internal document, available upon request (MOMENTUMSC@prb.org)
MOMENTUM Knowledge Management Plan	The MOMENTUM Knowledge Management Plan lays out a broad strategy for coordination and collaboration, learning and adaptation, synthesis and packaging, and knowledge sharing within and beyond the suite.	Internal document, available upon request (MOMENTUMKM@prb.org)
Learning About Learning: Communications and Messaging	This USAID Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development (KDMD) two-page resource reviews the importance of communication and messaging and offers tips for planning and executing a communication strategy.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/L2_CommunicationsMessaging.pdf
What's a Share Fair? And How Can I Have One?	This USAID webinar explains how to hold a "share fair" to support communication and knowledge exchange in your field.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/events/what%E2%80%99s-share-fair-and-how-can-i-have-one
Capturing and Sharing Through Digital Storytelling	This USAID blog reviews the power of sharing stories and provides links to other organizations that are using stories to do development work.	https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/capturing-and-sharing-through-digital-storytelling
WHO Strategic Communications Framework for effective communications	This framework provides a strategic approach and set of principles and steps for effective practices that apply to a broad range of communication functions, including but not limited to communicating about your use of adaptive learning.	https://www.who.int/mediacentre/communication-framework.pdf

A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy	The purpose of this resource by the Johns Hopkins CCP is to provide practical guidance to those who are in a position to design, implement, or support a strategic health communication effort.	http://ccp.jhu.edu/documents/A%20Field%20Guide%20to%20Designing%20Health%20Comm%20Strategy.pdf

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