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Strengthening Technical Practice

PPL Strategic Learning Plan: Phase 2

**Leveraging Evidence Team/ Cekan Consulting
Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research**

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Strategic Learning Plan Phases

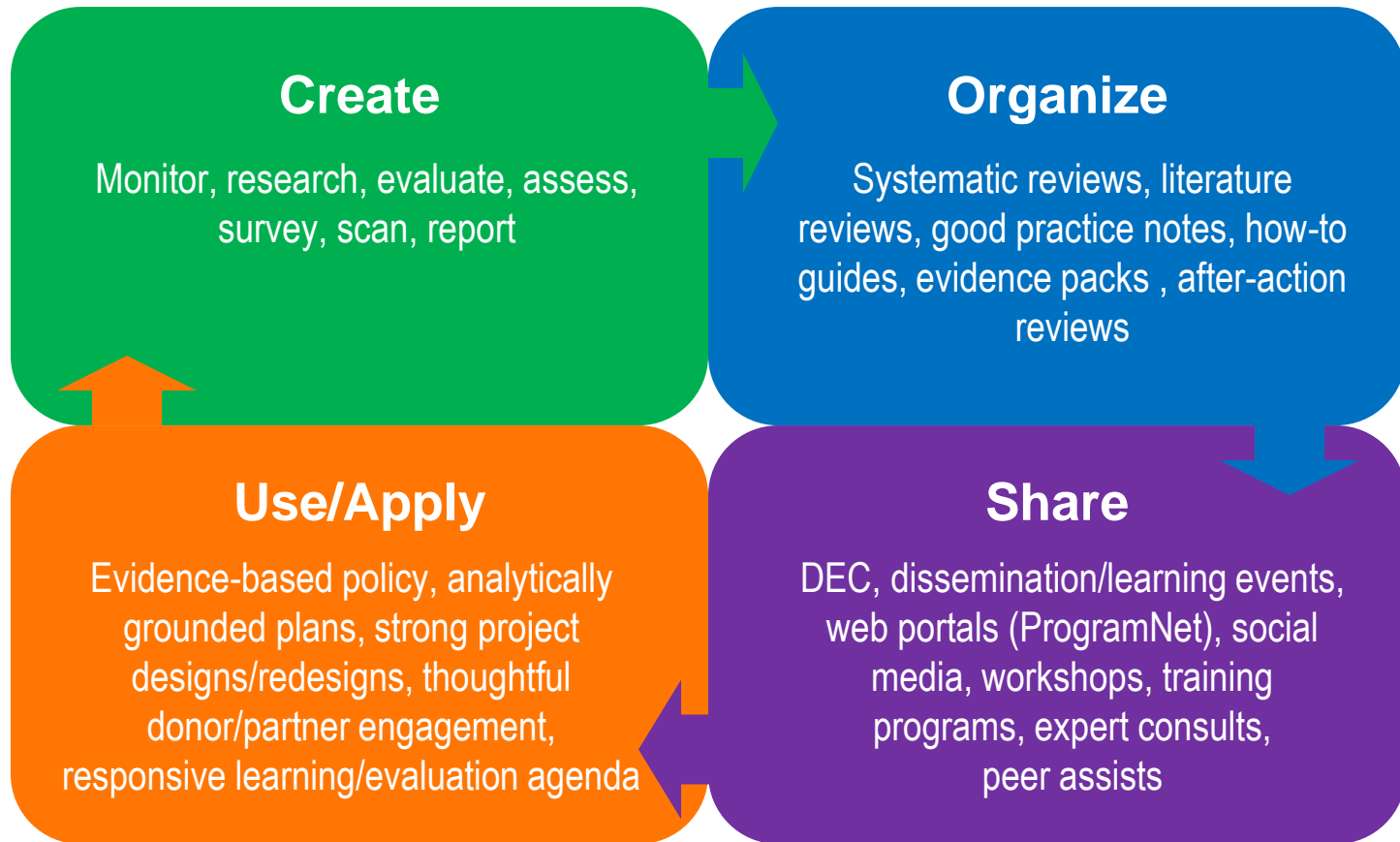
- **Phase 1:**
Embedding Learning throughout the Program Cycle
- **Phase 2:**
Strengthening Technical Practice
- **Phase 3:**
Promoting and Support a Learning Culture



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Current Environment/ Assumptions

- **Technical Units** (bureaus, offices, cross-cutting groups) want to share evidence and knowledge
- **Regional bureaus** are ‘knowledge hubs’ and want to share
- **Knowledge Management** specialists have explicit learning processes that are alike
- Current efforts **span the excellence spectrum**
- Bright spots exist where **learning champions** have **shareable practices** of what already works well
- **STP** will provide an **appreciative, collaborative environment** for further learning





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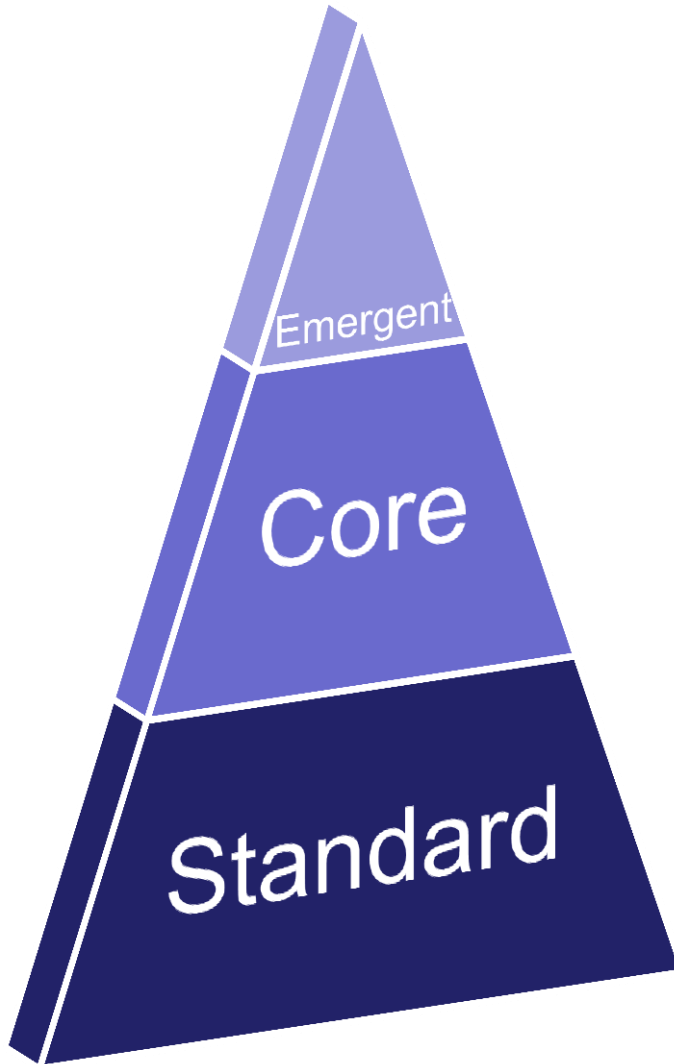
Global Health Stellar Example: Behavior Change Communications Programs





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Types of Knowledge at USAID



What are the **kinds of knowledge** that **Technical Units have**, or need to create, organize, share and use to strengthen their technical practice?

- **Emergent** – research questions and learning developed to address new problems, fill gaps, further thought leadership
- **Core** – substantive content within each development practice area, distilled learning from existing content
- **Standard** – common knowledge for all USAID staff as part of the development practice area/discipline



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Five Streams of Strengthening Technical Practice

1. Discover

- Mapping of current learning practices/ processes
- Identify bright spots, learning champions and great work
- Document USAID-supported communities of practice

2. Discuss

- Launch thought leaders in Learning Speaker Series
- Create SILK network/ working group and celebrate

3. Design/ Deliver

- Select and implement 6-8 Learning Practices Models
- Examine learning practices in 3-4 units

4. Disseminate

- Circulate and deliver outcomes and discuss them
- Share learners' "cool things" work via USAID Knowledge Fair, webinars, and other online outreach and engagement
- Link to missions (Ph 1) and support bureaus (Ph 3)

5. Determine

- Test tools, assess learning improvement, evaluate
- Examine learning from Phase 2 pilot for scale-up



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Discover

How is learning already taking place in USAID?

- Created survey based on **Appreciative Inquiry**
- Introduced **Learning Cycle** as guidepost for common understanding and analysis
- Introduced **Knowledge Pyramid** (Standard-Core-Emergent)
- Sample Q's:
 - What are the best learning practices in your Office?
 - How would you use \$1 million for USAID learning?
 - What are best incentives for learning?
 - What are examples of strong learning organizations outside and inside USAID?





Research Methodology

- Used Appreciative Inquiry
- Looked for broad bureau participation, inter-generational interviewees, and varied GS# levels
- “Daisy Chain” approach to identifying interviewees

Interview Statistics

- 79 interviews completed by PPL/LER and QED staff
 - 35 will be asked to be SILK Core members
- 49 offices represented
- 13 bureaus (technical and regional) and independent offices (e.g. OAPA, IDEA)
- 67 learning supporters identified but not interviewed



- What are the recurring learning issues, common elements, and critical insights – what were the Headlines?
 - We used a ‘rolling up’ process created by DCHA/ CMM
- What are Cool Things already happening?
- What are people Dreaming about?
- What are issues that overlap with missions’ learning?
- What are the issues that need to be brought to HR, CIO, and M-Bureau’s attention?

These will be written up in a report in the Fall of 2012.



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Learning Organization Needs

Learning organizations rely on:

1. A supportive learning environment
2. Concrete learning processes and practices
3. Leadership behavior that reinforces learning

Peter Senge, 1994





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Supportive Learning Environment for SILK

Objectives of *Sharing Insights, Learning And Knowledge (SILK)*:

- Create a 'space' that is a supportive learning environment for champions in which real-time bureau needs can be met by harnessing the power of other learners
- Solutions can be shared, new ones crafted and an identity created to further learning across USAID toward improving development outcomes.

Inputs:

- Provide an infusion of resources (technical, financial, intellectual, staff, technological/ logistical support), Speaker Series and their expert speaker advice, plus well-deserved recognition.

Expectations:

- They will determine how to collaborate, govern and organize
- They will be asked to create new Learning Improvers, share stories of 'cool things' and further learning at AID thru the STP pilot
- We will track their learning, knowledge sharing in a transparent process, documenting through monitoring outputs and outcomes



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Discover Stream: Identifying Who Are Learning Champions/ Cool Things

SILK is a group to be formed from **existing learning champions and supporters** already doing excellent and concrete learning work in USAID.

They have created existing **learning innovations** such as:

- CDCS/CLA process creation and launch by PPL
- Learning Alliances and GLEE gender sharing successes in BFS
- Vibrant partnerships for learning/research by GH and DCHA
- Distilled research for learning through effective retrospective analyses by E3

They analyze and reinforce useful **sharing** practices:

- AFR prioritized 4 areas of knowledge sharing
- BFS has created the respected Agrilinks community modeled on E3's Microlinks
- E3 on FRAMEWEB, ABCG, BATS, and GH's K4Health knowledge exchange
- M/CIO has created AidMap for disseminating USAID's work
- ... and many more



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Discover Stream: Management Support at USAID

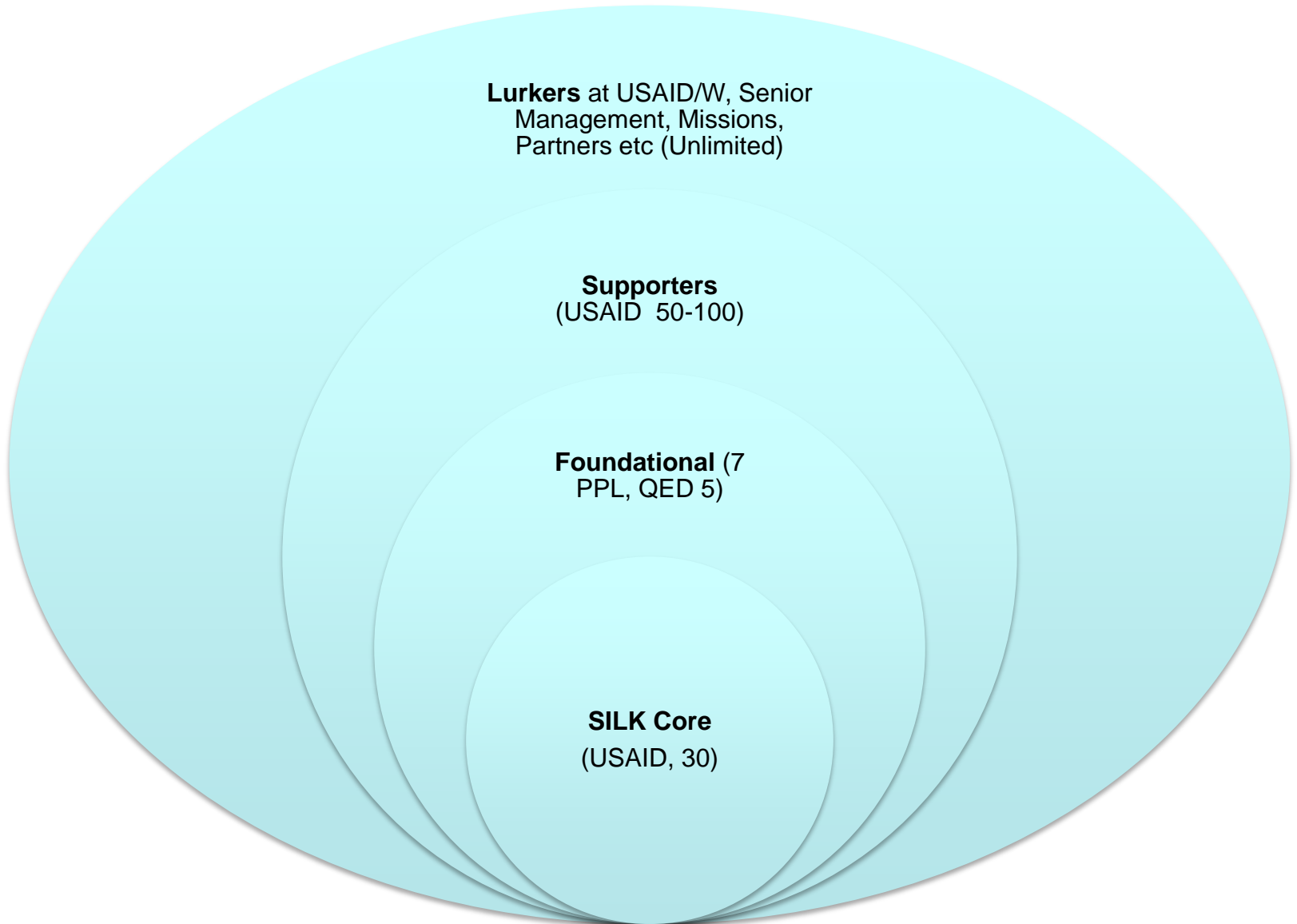
Learning Organizations also require supportive management, the bedrock that fosters learning and celebrates learners in their bureaus/ offices/ teams.

This management bedrock is key to transforming streams of learning by supporting their staff's learning!



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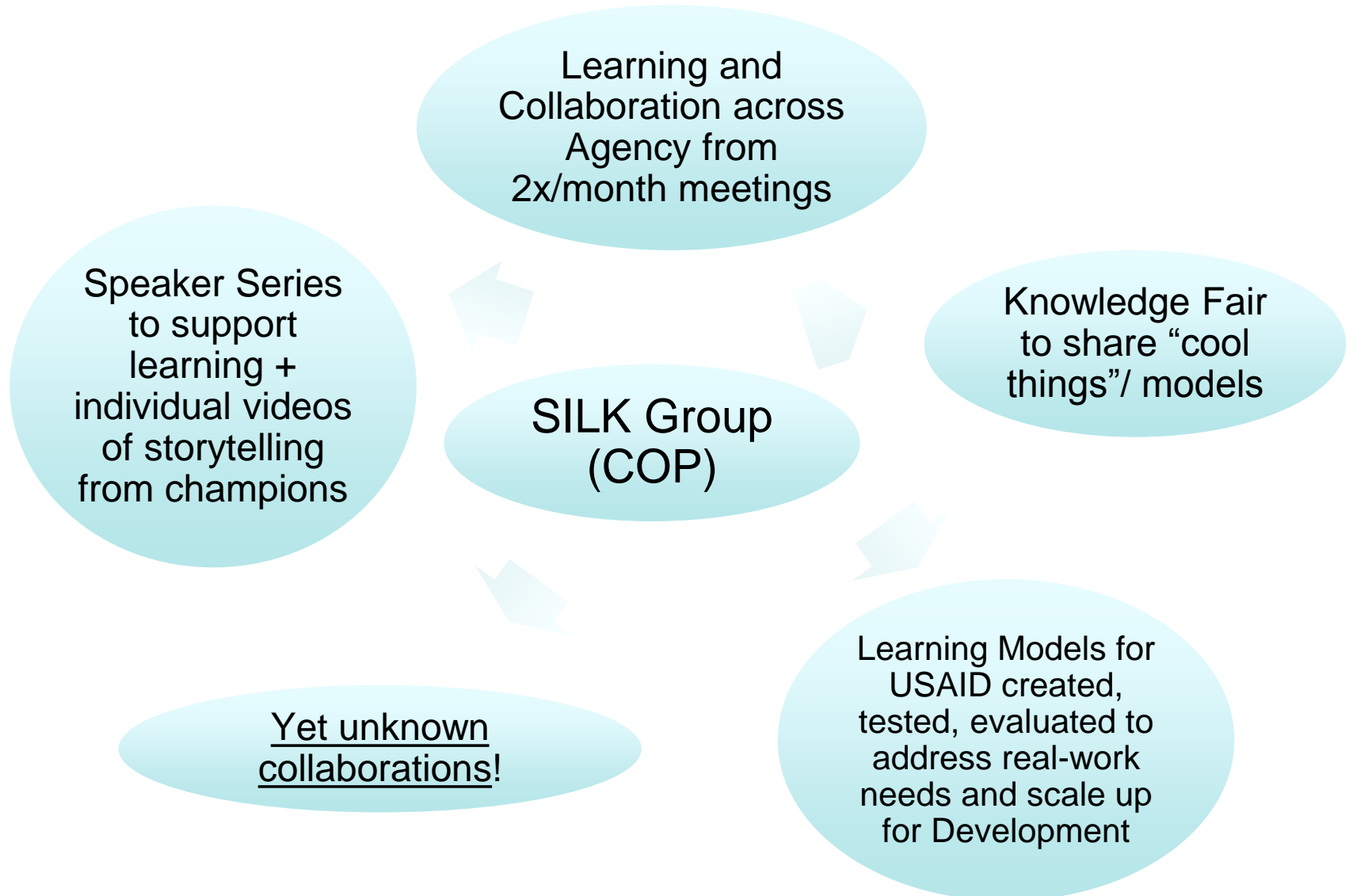
Possible Participants in SILK





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Kinds of STP Processes and Outputs





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Hoped for Outputs, Outcomes

1. Support an **Enabling Environment** through senior management recognition and systems and staffing revisions to put **learners at the center**, facilitating development outcomes
2. Support all phases of the Strategic Learning Plan through celebrating the best **internal learning champions in HQ and field**, provide **expert advisors' input**, share with partners
3. Further a **Culture of Learning** and learning-centric development through a celebratory, drumbeat approach across the Agency through **Principles and Strategies for Learning**
4. **Map organizational learning** practices/processes for key technical units and **identify elements of standard and core knowledge**
5. **Identify policy, operational solutions to further learning**
6. **Test concepts and tools** to be a part of the long-term approach to furthering what is already great, and learning from what isn't
7. **Test a capacity-building/internal consulting model** for a long-term approach to increasing learning throughout all levels of AID



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Next Steps

Get your feedback and suggestions...

