

Local Capacity Strengthening Policy: Implementation Updates



Photo by Faith Sashah for USAID

The Local Capacity Strengthening (LCS) Policy Implementation Plan was developed in accordance with [ADS 200](#) and involved Agency and external consultations. It is an internal guiding document and was approved by Assistant to the Administrator for Policy, Planning, and Learning, Michele Sumilas, on June 6, 2023. This document outlines key deliverables and plans related to LCS Policy implementation and is shared to promote transparency.

Introduction

USAID's first-ever [Local Capacity Strengthening \(LCS\) Policy](#) was launched on October 19, 2022. The Policy guides USAID decisions about why and how to invest in the capacity of local actors based on principles derived from an emerging consensus across the development and humanitarian landscape, feedback from local actors and partners, and years of implementation experience and evidence. The Policy informs USAID programming that builds upon the existing strengths of local actors and systems, responds to dynamic local priorities, and aligns with USAID strategic aims.

An internal LCS Policy Implementation Plan guides the Agency in institutionalizing and operationalizing the Policy's principles throughout the life of the Policy and will be **reviewed and updated annually as needed** by the cross-agency LCS Policy Implementation Team.

This resource is a summary of the internal implementation plan, which outlines key deliverables related to Policy implementation.

Policy Implementation Actions

The LCS Team is responsible for coordinating USAID's efforts to address the four priorities outlined in the Local Capacity Strengthening Policy:

1 Institutionalize Accountability of USAID Leadership

Sustained, consistent, and coordinated **leadership-level support** is a key enabler of successful Policy implementation. The LCS Team will aim to coordinate all engagement with leadership on the Policy, including Agency Senior Leaders and cross-Agency management committees. The LCS Team will also work with Functional Bureaus and Sectors to develop **Sector-Specific Implementation Guides** as a resource for Agency staff on how to more effectively implement the LCS Policy in various sectors.

2 Prioritize Accountability of USAID to Stakeholders

The LCS Team will continue to have regular engagement with USAID partners, stakeholders, and local actors to support learning and feedback. The LCS Team will prioritize accountability to USAID stakeholders by disseminating evidence-based and best-fit practice and supporting communities of practice.

Additionally, USAID intends to convene an **Annual Learning and Feedback Forum** every October over the lifespan of the Policy near the anniversary of the Policy's launch to



monitor Policy implementation and to create a feedback loop for stakeholders and partners to share their experiences with the Agency. Please direct questions about the 2023 Forum to: lcspolicycomments@usaid.gov

3 Integrate Effective LCS Practice into the Program Cycle and Resources

The LCS Team will contribute to the **revisions of portions of the Automated Directives System (ADS)**. The LCS Team also plans to issue a revised **guidance note on incorporating LCS in USAID's [Program Cycle](#)**.

4 Develop Tools and Resources

The LCS Team will develop resources to support Policy implementation throughout Agency activities. This team will regularly update the internal and external resources needed to assist Agency staff and partners to operationalize the LCS Policy.

- The primary public home for LCS Policy **Resources** is the [Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#) webpage, which offers dozens of resources, including: LCS Policy translations, LCS Policy 2-pagers, indicator resources, and case studies. Additional resources have been shared on other websites like [Learning Lab](#) and [WorkwithUSAID.org](#) to support stakeholders and implementing partners in their integration of the LCS Policy into programming, including the [eight interactive Micro-Trainings](#).
- The LCS Team has developed and will continue to add to a robust Internal Resource Hub on effective local capacity strengthening including practical tips, templates, and examples for Missions. Additional requests for resources can be made at the annual LCS Policy Learning and Feedback Forum and by contacting lcspolicycomments@usaid.gov.

Key Contextual Considerations

[The seven principles](#) outlined in the LCS Policy are flexible and action-oriented, and meant to enable coherence in decision-making. Principles can help USAID translate its values into behaviors. In addition to these principles, Policy implementation should consider, where appropriate, the following contextual considerations.

Conflict Sensitivity and Integration

Conflict can be made worse by LCS programming that is blind to conflict's existence and nature. Conflict sensitivity mitigates this risk. Conflict integration goes further and shows that conflict dynamics can also represent opportunities to implement LCS programming that reinforces and fosters peace and security—positive in their own right, but also the conditions most likely to support sustained capacity strengthening, while encouraging USAID to broaden our definition of effective and responsible programming.

Climate Change

Effective local capacity strengthening can empower local actors to address climate change mitigation and adaptation on their own terms and promote more sustainable systems change. Adaptation in particular needs the deep engagement of local actors since climate change impacts will be highly specific to local conditions

Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Coherence

Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) coherence is the effort to improve complementarity and collaboration across humanitarian, development, and peace actors working on shared objectives. HDP

coherence offers a critical step forward in moving beyond silos, and enhancing coordination on shared objectives in a way that puts local actors (including those that are traditionally excluded) in the lead.

Inclusive Development

Every individual and community, of all diverse identities and experiences, are instrumental in the transformation of their own societies. Their equitable inclusion in LCS helps reduce the likelihood of unintended harmful consequences by validating and improving USAID's understanding of contextual knowledge, bolstering the credibility of programming interventions that USAID supports, increasing the likelihood that proposed solutions will be taken up and maintained, and enhancing USAID's ability to address humanitarian and development challenges comprehensively.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

In alignment with the USAID [DEIA commitments](#) and [Agency Equity Action Plan](#), the LCS Team will strive to improve the diversity of personnel, policy, processes, and programs throughout the Agency by actively working to expand the diverse thought leadership on local capacity strengthening.

Where do we go from here? Our Learning and Assessment Approach

The LCS Team plans to track implementation of the Policy, as well as adapt and learn from implementation. These actions are illustrative of the various ways the Implementation Team will monitor and learn from the Policy rollout:

- In keeping with the spirit of the LCS Policy and in particular Principle 7, “Practice Mutuality with Local Partners,” the LCS Team will **convene an annual learning and feedback forum** with implementing partners, Agency staff, and local actors.
- The LCS Team will contribute to ongoing evidence development and learning around the [Agency Learning Agenda](#), particularly on Question 8¹, by linking resources and case studies to the working group and partnering in learning agenda events.
- The LCS Team will contribute to [Local Works](#) **priority learning areas** through resource and evidence development.
- Policy implementation will also use data from the [CBLD-9 Indicator](#) as well as the [Locally Led Programs indicator](#) to monitor the impact of our capacity strengthening support on the performance of local organizations and the extent to which the Agency is utilizing local capacity strengthening to support locally led programs, respectively.
- A **Policy Implementation Assessment** will be conducted five years after the publication of the Policy. Feedback from local actors, particularly USAID partners, will be a critical component of this assessment.
- The LCS Team will conduct **periodic reviews of solicitations** to check for shifts in how LCS is defined and operationalized.
- As appropriate, the LCS Team will **coordinate and share learnings with other international development and aid donors and institutions**.

¹ Question 8 of the Agency Learning Agenda: “How can USAID more equitably engage local knowledge, assets, and practices and align programming with local priorities and metrics for success?”