2023 CLA CASE COMPETITION

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Case Title:

CLA in USAID/Ukraine's Cybersecurity BAA Process

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Summary:

This case highlights the application of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) principles in USAID/Ukraine's cybersecurity Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) process. With the aim of addressing the urgent need to strengthen cybersecurity in Ukraine, USAID adopted a comprehensive CLA approach throughout the activity design and procurement process.

Recognizing the complexity and evolving nature of the cybersecurity challenge, USAID engaged in extensive collaboration and co-creation with stakeholders, including technical experts and partners.

The CLA approach facilitated knowledge sharing, enabled diverse perspectives to be integrated, and harnessed innovative ideas to inform the activity design. This collaborative design process ensured the integration of key stakeholders' expertise and enhanced the overall effectiveness of the activity.
To promote learning and adaptability, USAID incorporated iterative review processes, allowing for feedback, and iterative improvements. This approach provided a platform for stakeholders to refine their concept, ensuring a more flexible and adaptable activity design.

The outcomes of this CLA approach were transformative. The BAA process resulted in an activity design that effectively addressed immediate cybersecurity challenges while fostering long-term resilience. By embracing CLA, USAID/Ukraine demonstrated a commitment to organizational learning and adaptive management, resulting in a more impactful and sustainable intervention.

This case exemplifies the power of CLA in activity design and procurement showcasing the value of collaboration, learning, and adapting in the context of USAID/Ukraine's cybersecurity BAA process. By integrating CLA principles, USAID/Ukraine ensured a responsive activity design, enhanced technical expertise, and maximized development outcomes.

1. **WHAT: What is the general context in which the case takes place? What organizational or development challenge(s) or opportunities prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt?**

The case takes place in the context of Ukraine's vulnerability to cyberattacks, particularly those orchestrated by the Russian Federation. Since 2014, the Kremlin has engaged in a campaign of "hybrid warfare" against Ukraine, which includes significant cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure and facilities. These attacks have aimed to destabilize the country, decrease confidence in its ability to provide essential services and security, and violate its sovereignty in cyberspace. The sophisticated nature of these cyberattacks, timed to coincide with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, highlights the urgent need for enhanced cybersecurity measures.

In response to this organizational and development challenge, the Government of Ukraine (GOU) has taken steps to strengthen its cybersecurity capabilities. It established the National Cybersecurity Coordination Center, adopted cyersecurity laws and strategies, and cooperated with international partners, including the United States. Recognizing the significance of cybersecurity in mitigating the impacts of Russia's aggression, USAID included it as a critical area of focus in its 2019-24 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Ukraine.

By engaging in collaboration and co-creation, USAID sought to integrate diverse perspectives and innovative ideas into the activity design. To address the complexity of building the cybersecurity of Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, the Mission decided to utilize a BAA to develop our approach to building Ukraine’s cyber resilience. We selected the BAA to help the Mission define the core set of problems, co-develop solutions, identify competencies, and explore and potentially expand available resources. The BAA process was used to research and jointly develop a new activity with a diverse and experienced pool of collaborators using a participatory approach, building upon overall Agency guiding principles.

2. **What two CLA Sub-Components are most clearly reflected in your case?**

External Collaboration

Internal Collaboration

3. **HOW: What steps did you take to apply CLA approaches to address the challenge or opportunity described above?**

To address the challenge at hand, we implemented CLA approaches intentionally and systematically, combining internal collaboration and external collaboration as key subcomponents. The following steps were taken to ensure the success of our CLA approach.

First, we formed a co-creation team consisting of USAID and external stakeholders with expertise in cybersecurity. This team worked closely together throughout the entire process, fostering internal collaboration. Their diverse perspectives and insights played a crucial role in shaping our approach.

Next, we ensured that the co-creation ethos remained intact during implementation by transitioning to a "co-implementation" model. This involved transforming the role of the prime contractor from a sole technical decision-maker to that of a conductor, orchestrating the integration of various technical elements. This shift enabled us to maintain the co-creation spirit and enhance internal collaboration among team members.

Key stakeholders, both traditional and non-traditional USAID partners, played an integral role in our CLA approach. USAID and experienced development partners shared their knowledge and expertise with new partners, particularly in navigating USAID's reporting and fiscal requirements. This capacity-building exercise facilitated external collaboration and ensured that all stakeholders were equipped with the necessary skills and understanding to contribute effectively.

Throughout the process, we encountered several key decision points. For example, one decision involved the composition of the co-creation team, ensuring a balance between USAID representatives and external stakeholders. Another decision point revolved around the level of technical direction provided to new partners, striking a balance between maintaining USAID's standards and fostering innovation. We relied on relevant information such as expertise, project management tools, and design approaches shared by the new implementation partners to inform our decision-making.

As our CLA approach unfolded, it naturally evolved and shifted over time. The transition from co-creation to co-implementation represented a significant shift in our approach, allowing us to leverage the strengths and insights of all stakeholders involved. This evolution led to trial implementation approaches that blended elements from Washington D.C. and Silicon Valley, emphasizing the importance of learning and adapting.

In summary, our CLA approach involved a systematic and intentional implementation process. By prioritizing internal collaboration and external collaboration, we ensured the active participation of key stakeholders, facilitated knowledge sharing, and fostered an inclusive environment. Through ongoing learning and evolution, we successfully navigated the challenges and capitalized on the opportunities presented.

4. RESULTS: Choose one of the following questions to answer.

We know you may have answers in mind for both questions; However please choose one to highlight as part of this case story

A. DEVELOPM ENT RESULTS

Using a CLA approach has made a significant contribution to our development outcomes, as evidenced by the positive results achieved. The co-creation ethos ensured that diverse perspectives and expertise were incorporated, leading to a more robust and effective design. This inclusive and participatory approach fostered innovation, creativity, and adaptability, allowing us to tailor our interventions to the unique context and needs of the stakeholders.

By involving partners new to USAID and promoting learning among all team members, we created a collaborative environment that facilitated capacity building in multiple directions. USAID and experienced development partners shared their expertise in working with USAID, while non-traditional partners brought valuable cybersecurity knowledge. The technical direction provided by USAID and the prime contractor helped familiarize the new partners with USAID reporting and fiscal requirements, ensuring smooth integration into the activity.

Additionally, the transition from the co-creation design process to co-implementation has allowed for a more inclusive and collaborative implementation approach. Rather than the prime contractor monopolizing technical direction, they now act as the conductor of a diverse orchestra, harmonizing different technical elements. This approach promotes shared ownership, collaboration, and innovation, leading to more effective and sustainable development outcomes.

In conclusion, the utilization of CLA approaches, such as co-creation and co-implementation, has contributed significantly to our development outcomes. The evidence demonstrates the positive impact of this inclusive and participatory approach, fostering innovation, collaboration, and adaptive responses to complex challenges. Without employing a CLA approach, we believe our development results would have been less comprehensive, less contextually relevant, and less resilient in the face of evolving circumstances.

5. **ENABLING CONDITIONS: How have enabling conditions - resources (time/money/staff), organizational culture, or business/work processes - influenced your results? How would you advise others to navigate any challenges you may have faced?**

One of the enabling conditions that had a positive impact was the diverse range of organizations that applied and participated in the co-creation workshop. The BAA process attracted nontraditional private sector partners, including organizations with no prior USAID or USG experience. This diversity brought a wealth of organizational and technical expertise in addressing cybersecurity from various perspectives. However, there were challenges that we faced. Ukrainian and women-led organizations were underrepresented among the expressions of interest (EOIs) submitted. This may reflect the underrepresentation of women in the tech industry and their limited familiarity with USAID proposal processes. To address this, additional opportunities could have been provided to address potential partner questions and engage with these organizations.

Another obstacle we encountered was the categorization of EOI submissions into "expert" and "implementing partner" categories. Some offerors found it challenging to determine which category they fell into, leading to inconsistencies in the review process. Furthermore, the diversity of co-investment offers received made it difficult to compare and evaluate them effectively. Providing greater clarity and specificity in the solicitation stage could have helped address these challenges.

The preference for a single award by USAID changed the dynamic of the co-creation process. While it promoted the emergence of consensus, it may have limited the willingness to seek outside expertise.

In terms of the co-creation workshop, it was a complex and challenging process that required effective facilitation. Co-creation, especially with a diverse group of participants, can be difficult. It was important to allow participants time to get to know each other and hear different perspectives. The facilitators played a critical role in guiding discussions and resolving challenges that arose during the workshop.