SCOPING QUESTIONS FOR WORKING GROUPS

Before you launch an online working group, it's important to spend some time considering whether an online space is the right tool for your members and how it will help your group achieve its goals. This document walks group facilitators through a series of questions to help assess whether an online space is a good fit for your working group members. These questions are a starting point to open the conversation about who will participate in the space and how it will be used. You will probably have additional questions to consider that are specific to your group's purpose and goals.

Audience:
- Who will be the users of the online space?
    - Are there certain stakeholders who *must* participate for this activity to be considered a success?
- What do we think users will want to do on the space?
- How do we think they will interact with each other on the space?
- Consider the creation of subgroups carefully. Will they help the group achieve its objectives, or result in an overly compartmentalized space? Too many subgroups can make it difficult for members to actively engage with one another, especially on cross-cutting topics.

Activity goals:
- What do we want members to do on the space?
- Which features in the online space do we think will be most useful to users?
- How does the online working group fit in with other engagement activities, such as webinars, in-person meetings, conference calls, etc.? How do we connect the dots between the online working group activities and others connected to our objectives?
- What is our plan to close out the online working group once deliverables have been completed?

Indicators of success/failure:
- What specific outcomes need to be achieved to consider this activity a success? Think qualitatively in terms of outcomes and impact, in addition to quantitatively (i.e., outputs).
- How will we know the working group is successful?
- What potential problems would indicate a need to change our approach to using the space and engaging members?

Identify barriers and incentives:
- What challenges do we anticipate in getting members to use the space or interact with each other (in terms of functionality, trust/relationship building, etc.)?
- How do we plan to address those challenges? What will need to be in place in order for this activity to move forward?

- How much time will most members be able to dedicate to using the space?
- What can we do to incentivize the use of the online space by the target audience?
- What are the incentives for our members to actively contribute to group discussions and activities? Do different audiences need different incentives?

Member training and support:

The Learning Lab team can offer limited technical support related to the online working groups, however facilitators must be prepared to train and support their members in using the site. With that in mind, consider the following questions:

- How familiar are members with using online spaces?
- What is our plan to train members to use the online working group features (for example, by making use of the resources available for working groups on Learning Lab)?
- What support will members need to effectively engage on the space?
- How much time will we be able to dedicate to get members up to speed on using the online space, as well as continuing support?