

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA):

facts and misconceptions

Developed by: **Acute Incite**

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If you are struggling to integrate Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) in your work and across your project or organization, the experts at **Acute Incite** have your back!

Keep reading for some common myths around CLA and tips to dispel them at your organization.

CLA is unrealistic and burdensome. *(Who has time?)*

False. There are very few required elements of CLA and plenty of flexibility.

Top tip:

A CLA approach plans for incremental change, so you can customize processes and practices to local and program contexts.

USAID Learning Lab has everything you need to know about CLA *(Who needs training?)*

False. USAID's Learning Lab does provide a tremendous number of resources, tools, good practices, and CLA case studies.

As with many resource libraries, the volume of content can be overwhelming and may not offer the contextualization of how it can be fully adapted to your specific needs (e.g., how to create systematic CLA plans adapted for your program's context and culture).

Top tip:

Build staff capacity at all levels to understand, design, develop, and implement effective CLA plans and processes. To create an enabling environment for learning, every level of an organization needs to have a shared understanding and speak the same language.

CLA is just another word for adaptive management. *(Why does it require more specialized knowledge or skills than basic project management?)*

True. CLA is USAID's term for adaptive management. It is also an intentional, systematic, and resourced approach to iterative learning that requires a shared understanding, foundational practices and processes, and cultivating an intentional whole-team approach for continual improvement.

Top tip:

Perennial challenges to CLA include leadership buy-in, time, and money. When leadership is on board, time and money become less of a challenge. (In fact, a CLA approach should lead to improved efficiencies!) Don't let the day-to-day pull of focusing on deliverables push this to the side.

Make sure time and budget is set aside and your Chief of Party (COP)—and broader project or organizational leadership— is onboard.

CLA helps win proposals.

True. You increase your chance of winning by demonstrating your past ability to iteratively learn and adapt. Plus, writing realistic, practical, and informed CLA plans within your proposal not only shows you share USAID's priorities, it proves you know how to deliver them.

Top tip:

Review how well your programs are implementing their existing CLA plans. The true power of CLA is lost when you cannot tell a story about what you have learned, how you learned it, and the way you responded. Make demonstrating your organization's commitment to learning and adaptive management part of your culture.



To learn more, secure your seat for the **Integrating Effective CLA Plans into USAID Awards** online course starting on September 16.



Download the full resource (linked in description)

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