



Tips for Developing and Using a Learning Agenda

A Focus on Innovation

Innovation in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

For the Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) program, innovation is expected to produce a broad spectrum of new or adapted products, programming, strategies, approaches, interventions, policies, and practices designed to prevent unintended teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections among adolescents and promote positive youth development. Innovation requires fully understanding the nature of a problem that a population is facing, and then using time and resources to build and test a solution for that problem. Innovative solutions may involve iterating on existing practices to optimize them instead of starting from scratch. Tier 2 Innovation Hubs (Tier 2 Hubs) create structures, supports, and cultures that promote this type of innovation. Hubs have a role in developing and supporting TPP innovation using incubator, accelerator, and hybrid structures that will guide innovation development teams (IDTs).

A key product of innovation projects, including Hub support of specific IDTs and their innovations, is the story of what happened and what was learned along the way. This story should include a description of the original problem, what teams did to innovate solutions, what worked and didn't work from these trials, and the resulting conclusions and promising findings about the innovation(s). With this storytelling goal in mind, a learning agenda provides a vehicle by which Hubs can structure and document their project activities so they will be able to share their learnings from a variety of perspectives and data sources. This tip sheet focuses on the development of Hub learning agendas, but IDTs may also use this resource and apply its principles if their Hub asks them to create their own learning agendas.

TPP Innovation Hub types

Incubators support multiple cohorts of IDTs in exploring gaps and user needs, and building ideas through to prototype using participatory methods.

Accelerators support cohorts of IDTs with existing, promising prototypes to evaluate and prepare for future evaluation, new funding, and dissemination using participatory methods.

Hybrids support cohorts of IDTs through both incubator and accelerator phases.

What is a learning agenda?

Learning agendas are systematic plans for building evidence through identifying and addressing priority questions related to an innovative practice or process (Office of Evaluation Sciences n.d.). Learning agendas, and the evidence they ultimately yield, can be used to structure activities to maximize the useful information gained through a project, and should inform next steps or improvements in innovative practices and processes. They are living documents that should be iterative, flexible, transparent, and tailored (Office of Evaluation Sciences n.d.). Learning agendas and the process for using them can be tailored to an entity's unique goals and the context in which it operates. Federal agencies use learning agendas to inform their decisions about program operations, policy, and resource allocation; grant recipients use them to support program development, service delivery, and continuous quality improvement. Learning agendas in TPP Tier 2 are used to support the work of Tier 2 Hub grant recipients within an innovation space focused on developing, testing, and



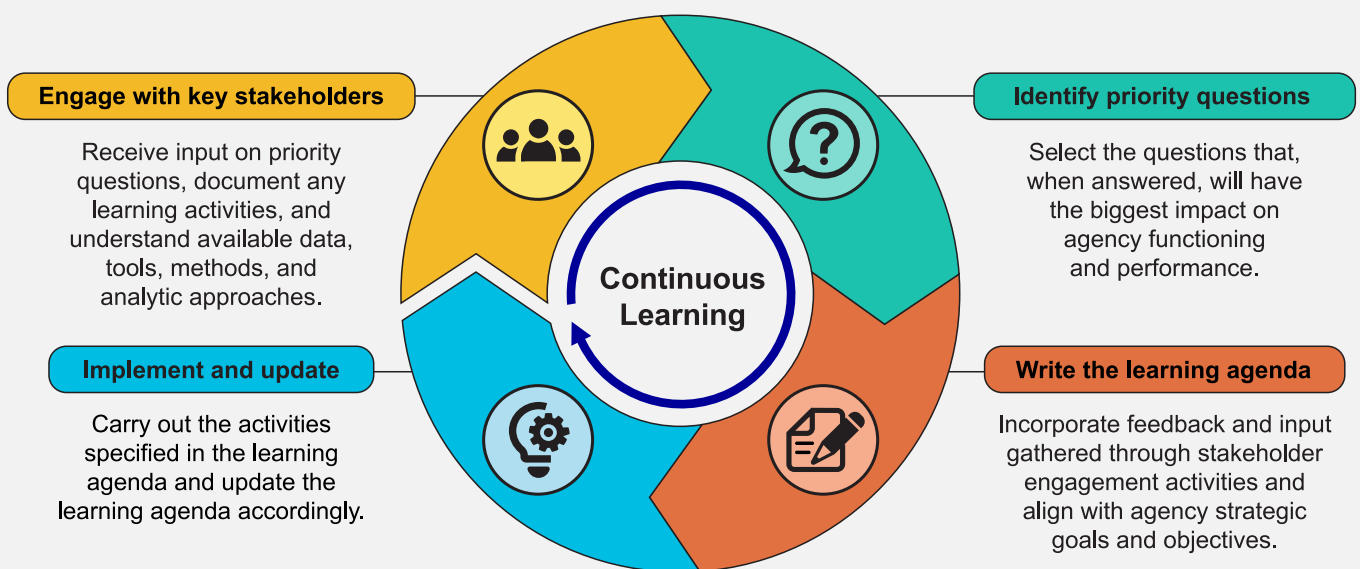
improving solutions to identified problems. The next section provides more detail about the requirements for Hub learning agendas.

To begin developing a learning agenda, each Hub will outline the questions it wants to answer, the activities it will use to answer these questions, and how it will use this new information to make decisions about the Hub’s approach to supporting IDTs. (The NOFO for the 2023 Hubs required applicants provide information about their learning agenda. This is a great foundation from which to work.) The learning agenda process is intentionally cyclical (see Figure 1; Adapted from the Office of Evaluation Sciences n.d.). Specifically, Hubs will work with key partners to identify the priority questions that will have the biggest impact on Hub and IDT performance. They will write the learning agenda (their plan to address these priority questions) and iterate with key collaborators. Hubs will implement their learning agenda and update it as they answer questions or identify new, related priority questions. They will again engage with their key partners to receive input on their learnings, new priority questions, and decisions for next steps. Thus, the learning agenda is both a product of Hubs’ initial planning efforts, to be completed in a specified time frame, and a living document that is expected to change over time.

A learning agenda should be a living breathing document – not something done once and put on a shelf. Revisiting and revising the learning agenda should be a regular activity during its implementation. It may be helpful to revisit a learning agenda before starting a new cohort or after a pivot occurs.

Hubs will use their learning agenda as a guide to conduct activities that (1) answer their priority questions, (2) inform decisions about next steps, and (3) share key findings with others. The learning process itself will inform updates to the living document over time. Hubs’ first iterations of their agendas might focus broadly on Hub or IDT processes, such as identifying an efficient yet thorough process for developing promising innovations and moving through the innovation pipeline. Hubs’ later iterations of their agendas might focus more on experiences with pivots and lessons learned through the implementation of their learning process.

Figure 1. Learning agenda process



Source: Adapted from the Office of Evaluation Sciences n.d.



Hubs can build evidence about their approach to fostering TPP innovation by using a learning agenda to do the following:

- Summarize their goals and the process for innovating
- Identify milestones for the project¹, including strategies and supports to advance IDTs and achievement of milestones
- Outline plans to assess progress on milestones, as well as outputs and outcomes defined in the Hub's logic model and on performance measures from the Office of Population Affairs (OPA)
- Build an intentional culture of learning and continuous improvement within the Hub and within IDTs

As Hubs begin working with IDTs, they might decide to add questions and activities related to specific innovations.

Learning agenda examples:

- [YouthPower's Learning Agenda for Positive Youth Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#)
- [AmeriCorp's Strategic Learning and Evidence Building Plan: Fiscal Years 2022–2026](#)
- [City Year's Research and Learning Agenda](#)

Your learning agenda

Your learning agenda should include and describe three elements: learning questions, learning activities, and learning products. A learning agenda template is available in the appendix. The learning questions, activities, and products should reflect your Hub's plans for implementing your innovation pipeline and defining and tracking associated milestones. Refer to the Tools for Defining and Tracking Milestones resource for additional information about milestones.

Learning questions

Learning questions are the basis of the learning agenda. Hub learning agendas should principally focus on questions about the Hub's unique approach to fostering TPP innovation. In other words, the learning questions should focus on process rather than on outcomes. Design learning questions to help you understand the ways in which your unique approach (which includes your Hub-specific milestones, tracking, innovation pipeline, and capacity-building activities) is facilitating and/or acting as a barrier for IDT progress toward identifying promising innovations. Use your logic model as a guide when developing learning questions. An example of a Hub learning question is:

Centering equity and inclusion in your learning agenda

Advancing equity, including by disrupting persistent health inequities, is a driving focus of our shared work. Incorporate principles of equity in all three learning agenda elements by using the following approaches:

- Use a participatory process to develop the learning agenda, including people with lived experience and diverse backgrounds (especially young people), and acknowledge and actively address power imbalances.
- Design learning questions, activities, and products to be inclusive of people with diverse backgrounds and varied lived experience, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and accessible.
- Emphasize IDT skills or competencies in learning questions, activities, and products, and embrace out-of-the-box thinking, such as ideas that push the current boundaries of systems, structures, and processes.

¹ Refer to the [milestones definition and planning guide](#) for more details.



How does our Hub support innovators in developing promising innovations that promote health equity?

Learning activities

Learning activities describe the strategies you will use to answer your learning questions. Design learning activities that will help you gather information (data) to answer learning questions. Use this information to make decisions about how to better support IDTs in building capacity, further developing their innovations, refining the innovation milestone and pipeline, and updating the Hub learning agenda. An example of a learning activity to address the learning question above is:

Review of IDT innovation materials, brief technical assistance surveys, and results from IDT piloting of innovations.

Learning products

Learning products document the information you learned through the learning activities when answering learning questions. Develop learning products that will facilitate sharing learning with other Hubs, IDTs, community partners, collaborators, and the adolescent sexual health field. Learning products can share learnings across more than one question and activity, though they don't have to. One example of a learning product is:

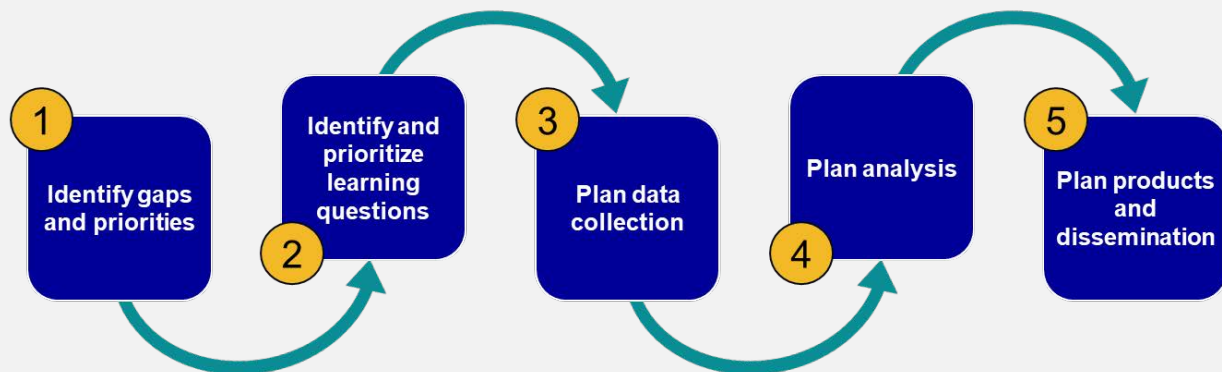
Conference presentation on Hub successes and challenges in supporting multiple teams toward developing promising innovations that promote health equity.

Steps to create and implement a Hub-level learning agenda

This section provides a brief step-by-step guide for creating and implementing a learning agenda to examine and improve innovation Hubs' support of IDTs through the innovation pipeline (see Figure 2 for a representation of this process).

Creating your learning agenda

Figure 2. Creating a Hub-level learning agenda





Step 1: Identify gaps and priorities for IDT progress

Engage youth, community partners, collaborators, and subject matter experts to identify gaps in and priorities for supporting IDTs to promote positive youth development and improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Collaborate on examining what is known about innovation development generally, sexual reproductive health needs, and innovations in sexual reproductive health. Include people who have been involved in past IDTs or might be involved in future IDTs. Develop plans for maintaining engagement with collaborators throughout the development and implementation of the learning agenda.

Step 2: Identify and prioritize learning questions

Work with collaborators to identify, create, and refine the learning questions based on information about gaps and priorities collected and discussed during Step 1.

Connect your learning questions to your capacity- and skill-building activities, goals, and objectives. For example, review your Innovation Capacity Assessment Tool and use parallel language and framing in your learning questions so that the activities and goals across documents align as appropriate. Similarly, connect your learning questions to the OPA performance measures, your innovation pipeline, your milestones, or other measures related to innovation development and evaluation.

After you identify your learning questions, prioritize them. Select learning questions that address critical needs for Hubs or IDTs to address first, and plan to address less time-sensitive questions later.

Tips for strong learning questions:

- Focus on quality rather than quantity.
- Focus on central questions that align with your logic model, strategic objective or goals, and key hypotheses.

Example: *What were the strengths in our approach for supporting IDTs in developing innovations that promote health equity?*

Step 3: Plan data collection to answer learning questions

Describe data needed to answer learning questions and how you plan to obtain those data through your learning activities. To do so, identify and document (1) existing information related to your learning questions (for example, existing literature, administrative data, interviews and focus groups, surveys, etc.); (2) how and when you will collect experiential information from IDTs to understand their perspectives on your approach to IDT support; (3) how and when you will collect OPA performance measures and other data needed to answer learning agenda questions or otherwise inform the identification, selection, and support of IDTs; and (4) who is responsible for data collection and when should they do so. Consider creating a crosswalk that lists the learning questions and the data you plan to use to address the questions to help you identify gaps in data sources or learning questions that for which you may need to plan additional data collection. For instance, you might find that your plans include using one source of data to address several questions, when it's only a good fit to answer two of the questions. You can then think about what other data you have, or could collect, to answer the remaining questions. Table 1 crosswalks a learning question, available data sources, and potential data sources to address gaps in the data.



Table 1. Sample crosswalk learning questions and data to answer questions

Learning question	Available data sources	Sources to address gaps in data
How does our Hub support innovators in developing promising innovations that promote health equity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hub logic model • IDT innovation materials • Results from IDT innovation pilot testing • Meeting notes 	Surveys or other data from IDTs about their satisfaction with Hub processes and supports

Step 4: Plan analysis

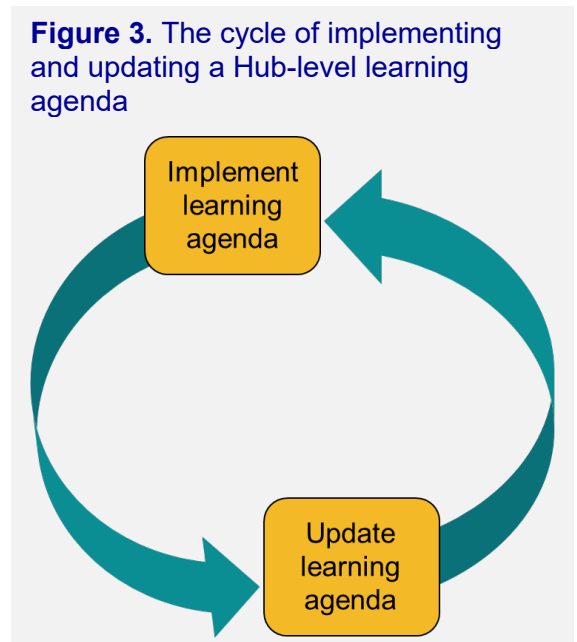
Describe the process you plan to take for analyzing learning question data. Processes should include your planned analytic approach to answering your priority learning questions, the timing and frequency of analyses, who will be involved in interpreting data, and how you expect to use the results to inform decision making and next steps.

Step 5: Plan products and dissemination

Learning products are meant to enable progress sharing and contribute to learning in the areas addressed by the learning questions. Identify the types of learning products and the purpose of each product, with special attention to opportunities for dissemination throughout the life of the project, rather than solely at the end when all of the data are collected and time and resource constraints may limit your capacity for thorough dissemination. Examples of learning products include infographics, webinars, podcasts, articles, and demo days. Identify the audience for each product (for example, IDTs, sexual and reproductive health collaborators) and the timing and method for disseminating each product. The plan in this step can include embedding these products in your dissemination strategy and identifying who should be involved in disseminating each product. Consider who will be the most powerful messenger for each learning product.

Implementing, revisiting, and revising your learning agenda

A key element of the learning process is using the results of your learning activities to inform your work. Once you have a written learning agenda, it becomes a living document that you can update and enhance as you gain new information through implementation. Implement the plans laid out in Steps 1 through 5, incorporating continuous quality improvement as a learning strategy. A learning agenda is designed to inform Hub-level capacity- and skill-building activities throughout the project period, not just at the end. Throughout the project, include diverse perspectives to help assess feedback from IDTs and key learnings to inform improvements in Hub activities. Update your learning agenda on a frequency that best fits your needs and goals. You might update it at a specific time interval (such as annually) or after completion of specific learning activities. The process of implementing the learning agenda should directly feed into updating your learning agenda, on a predetermined schedule, and these updates should feed into your next iteration of implementation (Figure 3).





Office of
Population Affairs

Additional learning agenda resources

[Learning Agendas Evidence Toolkit \(Evidence-Based Policymaking Collaborative\)](#)

[Evidence Act Toolkit \(Office of Evaluation Sciences, U.S. General Services Administration\)](#)

[Creating a Learning Agenda for Systems Change: A Toolkit for Building an Adaptive Public Health Workforce \(Public Health Learning Network\)](#)

[Tips for Creating a Learning Agenda \(U.S. Agency for International Development\)](#)

[Developing a Learning Agenda \(IREX\)](#)



Office of
Population Affairs

References

Office of Evaluation Sciences. "Learning Agenda Overview." n.d.

https://oes.gsa.gov/assets/toolkits/Learning_Agenda_Overview_updated.pdf. Accessed September 12, 2023.

Office of Population Affairs. "Notice of Funding Opportunity: Teen Pregnancy Prevention Tier 2 Adolescent Sexual Health Innovation Hubs." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023.