Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CREATIVITY IN CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF ADAPTIVE AND FLEXIBLE PROGRAMS

Prepared by Sarah Boddington
Presented Tuesday 18 February 2020

WHY ARE ADAPTIVE AND FLEXIBLE PROGRAMS IMPORTANT?

- Change needs to be locally led
- We work in highly changeable contexts
- We are addressing complex problems with no known solutions

WHAT MAKES THESE PROGRAMS CHALLENGING?

Locally driven by enough stakeholders

Clearly defined outcomes

Budgetary, contractual and operational flexibility

Strong relationships with enough stakeholders

Strategic reflection and adjustment

Innovative human resources management

Robust understanding of the political economy

Excellent monitoring, evaluation and learning systems

Good working relationship between donor and implementer

WHY DO THESE CHALLENGES PERSIST?

Much of the debate on bringing an adaptive and flexible approach to programming is at conceptual level and **there is a "gap in knowledge of what implementation entails".**

AGROWINGCULTURE
CONNECT • LEARN • GROW

Each program needs to grow its own culture. We can't transplant tools from one program to another.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR 2 ELEMENTS

Locally driven by enough stakeholders

Clearly defined outcomes

Budgetary, contractual and operational flexibility

Strong relationships with enough stakeholders

Strategic reflection and adjustment

Innovative human resources management

Robust understanding of the political economy

Excellent monitoring, evaluation and learning systems

Good working relationship between donor and implementer

Innovative human resources management

CO-DESIGN SKILL SETS AND RECRUIT FOR THEM USING A RUBRIC

	Poor (0-2)	Mixed (3-4)	Good (5-7)	Excellent (8-10)
Change Management	Does not consider change management approaches. Unable to demonstrate any change management practices in their work practices.	Expresses some knowledge of change management practices but does not specifically apply them in their work. Identifies the importance of change management but does not demonstrate effective planning and support for change processes in their work practices. Selects inappropriate response to challenges in change management	Demonstrates change management skills in their work practices. Uses appropriate change management approaches to support effective change/reform. Effectively plans and supports change through planning and analysis, communications, enabling structures and monitoring for change success.	Demonstrates a strong ability to work with organizations to clarify the desired change and driving/restraining forces for change. Mobilises and builds commitment for change through a shared vision and common direction, facilitates coalitions for change and champions/internal ownership of change. Effectively plans and supports change through planning and analysis, communications, enabling structures and monitoring for change success. Adapts approach based on successes/failures in the change process.
Resilience	Does not show an ability to stay focused under pressure. Unaware of the importance of dealing with setbacks and adapting in response to experience.	Demonstrates some ability to stay focused under competing pressures, however does not necessarily prioritise. Identifies the importance of dealing with setbacks but does not indicate an ability to bounce back from failure. Does not show an ability to adapt in response to experience	Demonstrates an ability to stay focused under competing pressures and prioritise. Deals with setbacks and bounces back from failure.	Demonstrates an ability to stay focused under competing pressures and to prioritise. Deals with setbacks and bounces back from failure, shows they learn from experience and adapts in response to experience. If one way doesn't work, finds another.

Extract from a Rubric for Soft Skills, from the Solomon Islands Resource Facility

USE INDUCTION TO BUILD EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL BEHAVIOUR

SUCCESS STRATEGIES	
Initiation of non-workplace social engagement	Difference minimisation communication techniques – use of similarity markers
Language proficiency	Explicit acknowledgment by non-local of learning
Status minimisation strategies	Collaborative 'quick wins'
Reinforcement of shared values outlook and allegiance	Joint travel/field trips
Suggestive dialogue	Clarification and agreement of goals – big and small
Negotiation and flexible adjustment	Reinforcement of complimentary skill sets

Extract from International Adviser Induction
Vanuatu Skills Partnership

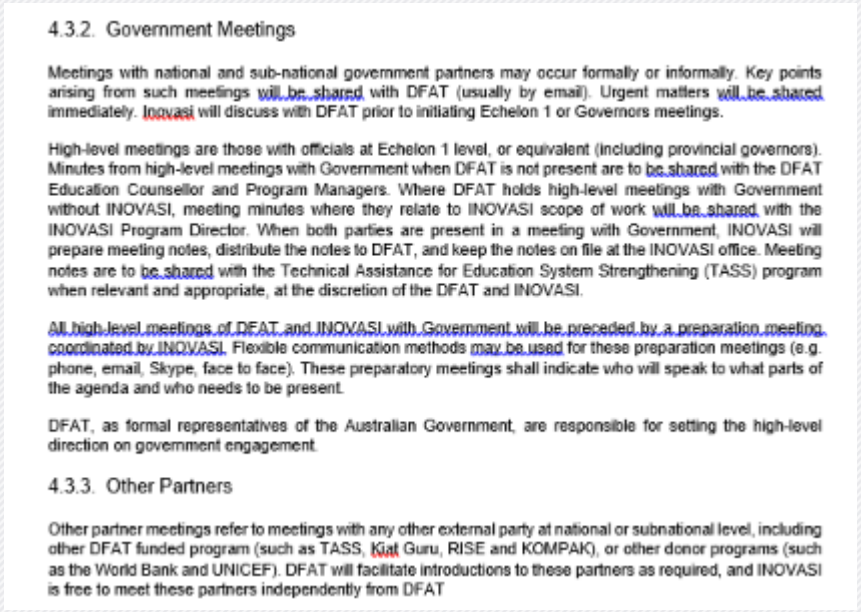
BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP-CENTRE CULTURE – USING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Area and Criteria for Assessment	P	F	G	VG
3. Communication and Relationships				
▪ Communicates with me in a way that is respectful and is sensitive to appropriate language use and tone				
▪ Communicates with me clearly so I have a good understanding of what is expected of me				
▪ Actively tries to build a positive working relationship with me				
▪ Demonstrates that he/she listens to me and considers my views and perspectives				
▪ Actively tries to break down any potential communication, cultural, personality-based, or gender barriers				
Comments				
Has your manager/adviser actively tried to build a positive and constructive working relationship with you?				

Extract from the International Adviser/Manager Performance Template
Vanuatu Skills Partnership

Good working relationship between donor and implementer

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT BUILDING WAYS OF WORKING – LANGUAGE USED, WHO SPEAKS



4.3.2. Government Meetings

Meetings with national and sub-national government partners may occur formally or informally. Key points arising from such meetings will be shared with DFAT (usually by email). Urgent matters will be shared immediately. Inovasi will discuss with DFAT prior to initiating Echelon 1 or Governors meetings.

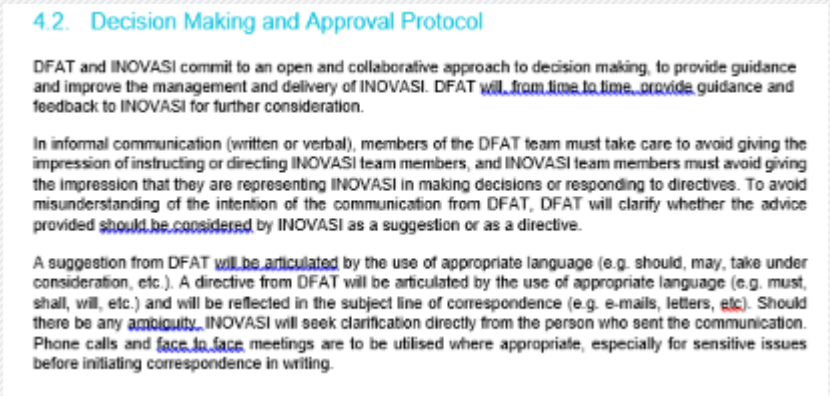
High-level meetings are those with officials at Echelon 1 level, or equivalent (including provincial governors). Minutes from high-level meetings with Government when DFAT is not present are to be shared with the DFAT Education Counsellor and Program Managers. Where DFAT holds high-level meetings with Government without INOVASI, meeting minutes where they relate to INOVASI scope of work will be shared with the INOVASI Program Director. When both parties are present in a meeting with Government, INOVASI will prepare meeting notes, distribute the notes to DFAT, and keep the notes on file at the INOVASI office. Meeting notes are to be shared with the Technical Assistance for Education System Strengthening (TASS) program when relevant and appropriate, at the discretion of the DFAT and INOVASI.

All high-level meetings of DFAT and INOVASI with Government will be preceded by a preparation meeting, coordinated by INOVASI. Flexible communication methods may be used for these preparation meetings (e.g. phone, email, Skype, face to face). These preparatory meetings shall indicate who will speak to what parts of the agenda and who needs to be present.

DFAT, as formal representatives of the Australian Government, are responsible for setting the high-level direction on government engagement.

4.3.3. Other Partners

Other partner meetings refer to meetings with any other external party at national or subnational level, including other DFAT funded program (such as TASS, Kiat Guru, RISE and KOMPAK), or other donor programs (such as the World Bank and UNICEF). DFAT will facilitate introductions to these partners as required, and INOVASI is free to meet these partners independently from DFAT



4.2. Decision Making and Approval Protocol

DFAT and INOVASI commit to an open and collaborative approach to decision making, to provide guidance and improve the management and delivery of INOVASI. DFAT will, from time to time, provide guidance and feedback to INOVASI for further consideration.

In informal communication (written or verbal), members of the DFAT team must take care to avoid giving the impression of instructing or directing INOVASI team members, and INOVASI team members must avoid giving the impression that they are representing INOVASI in making decisions or responding to directives. To avoid misunderstanding of the intention of the communication from DFAT, DFAT will clarify whether the advice provided should be considered by INOVASI as a suggestion or as a directive.

A suggestion from DFAT will be articulated by the use of appropriate language (e.g. should, may, take under consideration, etc.). A directive from DFAT will be articulated by the use of appropriate language (e.g. must, shall, will, etc.) and will be reflected in the subject line of correspondence (e.g. e-mails, letters, etc). Should there be any ambiguity, INOVASI will seek clarification directly from the person who sent the communication. Phone calls and face to face meetings are to be utilised where appropriate, especially for sensitive issues before initiating correspondence in writing.

Extract Figure E – from the Ways of Working with DFAT Guidelines Version 15 April 2016, Inovasi

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

1. Flexible and adaptive programs are complex and need structured approaches to decision making
2. They need to build their own culture, and do it collaboratively
3. All of us should fill in the gap in knowledge of “what implementation entails” – by sharing what we develop.

Australian Government
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade