

MSD Team Leaders Clinics: Prospectus

September 2022

Background

The leaders of MSD programmes play many roles in shaping the focus and direction of their teams. They help set and shape the culture. They orientate team members' understanding of MSD in a particular context. They signal desired and undesired behaviours. However, despite these critical responsibilities, the scope and nature of the MSD Team Leader (TL) role had not been clearly defined at an industry level.

In 2022, the DCED launched a project to understand the competencies of MSD Team Leaders. This work involved 10 interviews, 65 survey responses, and 7 focus groups with over 40 experienced practitioners. As a result of these collective inputs, we defined five 'domains' of MSD TL competency and identified many aspects of change required to better attract, engage and empower strong leaders.

Future work

The next phase of DCED's work will explore recruitment, support, and professional development of MSD team leaders in more depth. We aim to answer important practical questions:

- What should recruiters look for in a TL? What interview questions should they ask? What scenarios should they pose, and what should they look for in the answers?
- How should donors and contractors define and measure TL performance?
- What supporting functions need to be in place to help TLs grow and learn in their own professional development journey?
- How can future TLs be identified and supported?
- How should leadership teams be structured to integrate TLs with other key roles?

Ambition

Donor agencies and implementing organisations have begun answering some of these questions already. However, insights are tacit and fragmented into organisational and departmental silos. The ambition of these clinics is to link up the people, ideas and organisations to codify promising approaches, and generate buy-in to test and apply new approaches in the future. Ultimately the aim is to change the underlying structures and relationships that constrain the supply of MSD TLs. This is only possible through sustained dialogue and collaboration between donors and implementers.

Knowledge clinics

Knowledge clinics¹ offer a practical approach to bringing together people across a range of organisations who deal with implementation challenges. By jointly defining the key issues, pooling resources, best practices and experiences, a shared vision can emerge. Clinics codify tacit knowledge, build shared understandings, and synthesise existing approaches into practical guidance.

We are proposing two related clinics focused on MSD leadership recruitment and professional development, with plans for cross-fertilization between the groups. Each clinic is explained below.

How it works

1. **By 14 October:** Applicants submit a [short application](#) describing current role and relevant experience with MSD leadership teams, and interest in clinic group 1 or 2
2. **Late October:** Short-listed applicants invited for a 30-minute screening call to understand their experience & confirm their fit with clinic objectives & commitments
3. **Early November:** BEAM Exchange selects 8-10 people, organised into two groups
4. **Nov 2022 - Mar 2023:** Regular 'clinic' calls every two weeks (with break in middle)

Participant responsibilities

- Commit 1 hour/week over a 4-month period
- Read and suggest short documents, case studies, examples in preparation for calls
- Participate in 80% of calls - share practical examples from experience
- Read and provide feedback on written outputs that summarise learning

BEAM Exchange responsibilities

- Organise the overall process; built trust & protect confidentiality
- Select candidates, schedule meetings
- Frame questions and conversations, actively facilitate calls to keep focused
- Lead writing of anonymised outputs

Expected benefits and outcomes

- Access to leading thinking, approaches, and examples from other organisations
- Opportunity to spotlight organisational practices with potential for industry-wide adoption
- Influence framing of key industry-wide issue, including approaches of MSD donors
- Consolidate best practices with the potential to engage and prioritise non-traditional candidates, ultimately strengthening the pool of TLs and impact of MSD programmes
- Feed into exploration of deeper structural problems with how individual leaders are positioned within procurement/design of MSD programmes

¹ beamexchange.org/resources/1424/

Clinic 1: Recruitment of MSD team leaders

Generating improvements to the existing recruitment system

What problem does this clinic address?

With every new MSD programme that is launched, implementers scramble to find suitable candidates to propose as the Team Leader. In competitive bidding processes, this can lead to a narrowing of the available pool of TL prospects, as explicit, quantifiable criteria are valued over more implicit, subjective criteria. However, not all TLs are recruited in the same way - some are recruited after a programme is awarded, others are brought in to replace a TL mid-way through a programme, others are part of the proposal from its genesis. These differences in recruitment pathways are important to unpack.

This clinic explores how the MSD TL recruitment process actually works - where does it start and end, and what are the possibilities or leverage points for change? How does recruitment differ depending on programme design scenarios, and how do donors shape and structure the process through their requirements and preferences? The focus is on practical strategies for attracting, screening, interviewing and ultimately selecting team leaders.

Who is this clinic for?

- Donor staff with influence over MSD TL recruitment, who:
 - directly participate in hiring processes
 - design or adjust selection criteria
 - oversee TL 'replacement' in the middle of a programme
- Implementer staff with direct responsibility for MSD TL recruitment, such as:
 - HR professionals participating in recruitment/interviewing processes
 - Country and regional managers participating on selection committees
 - Technical leaders from HQ leading recruiting, interviewing and onboarding
 - Current and past MSD TLs
- Consultants with experience as MSD TLs or in the donor or implementer roles above

What will be discussed?

- 1) This clinic will mapping and analyse a range of recruitment processes in different organisations, including what role donors can (and should) play in the process. This will be disaggregated based on the [procurement format](#) (competitive procurement vs. co-creation vs. concept note) and the stage in programme life cycle (bidding stage, programme awarded stage, mid-programme)
- 2) With a basic landscape picture in mind, the clinic will turn to sharing practices and resources from actual recruitment experiences. Attention will be paid to how the context of a given programme shapes the filtering of which key competencies are prioritised in TL recruitment. With help from the facilitator, the specific search terms, interview questions and case study scenarios will be organised and mapped to the MSD competency framework and emerging MSD leadership domains.

What will come out of this clinic?

- Guidance on contextualization of MSD TL competencies into programme specific roles
- Practical recruitment examples from a wide range of organisations:
 - 1) **Headhunting:** search terms, channels, approaches, adjacent industries
 - 2) **CV review:** strategies for keeping a broad and diverse pool through this stage, training or guidance for individuals doing the filtering.
 - 3) **Interview questions:** questions, approaches to assessment and decision-making (including trade-offs between different types of candidates).
 - 4) **Case studies:** example scenarios, competencies prioritised, assessment.

Clinic 2: Developing MSD leadership teams

Career pathways and team structures

What problem does this clinic address?

This clinic aims to tackle the inter-related issues of the architecture leadership teams on MSD programmes, and the support systems and professional development pathways for MSD TLs themselves. Understanding the available options for how to structure MSD leadership teams can help design better programmes with more realistic and well-rounded teams. At the same time, there are particular expectations and responsibilities placed on the TL, so it's useful to unpack what resources are available to help TLs thrive, learn and grow into their full potential. Supporting TLs starts with providing meaningful experiences to up-and-coming potential future leaders, and extends to tailored supports and well-structured leadership teams.

Being a Team Leader is a high-pressure, complex and sometimes lonely role. There are enormous expectations - many describe the ideal MSD TL as a "superhero". In reality, TLs work with and depend on their leadership teams. These include deputy team leaders, technical directors, and heads of Operations, Finance, Grants/Procurement and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. This clinic will explore how particular configurations of leadership teams, and their internal dynamics, can support TL performance and enable career progression for future TLs.

Who is this clinic for?

- Donor staff managing or overseeing MSD programmes
- Implementer HQ staff
 - managing or supporting MSD programme leadership teams
 - responsible for talent and leadership pipelines
- Current or past MSD leadership team members (TL, Deputy, etc.)

What will be discussed?

- 1) Gather examples of different archetypes of management team structures - include role definitions and individual profiles. Examine overlaps in competencies across leadership teams to understand how team structure influences TL performance.
- 2) Map out a range of progression pathways based on experiences/CVs of TLs, compared to those who have gotten 'stuck' at middle management. What key roles or team structures support progression/promotion? Pay attention to pathways for national staff to be promoted to team leader, and HR decisions made about how certain positions are classified (as international vs. national positions, with salary scale implications).
- 3) Take stock of support systems and coaching/mentorship services for MSD leaders - what is available, and what is needed? What are different ways of structuring supports (in-house vs. external firm), and from whose budget - programme, country office, regional office or central HQ? How to engage donors in conversation about spending resources on this? How to support leaders coming into MSD from other fields, who lack the terminology, but may have the right underlying competencies?

What will come out of this clinic?

- Visual and definitions of common archetypes of management teams (role definitions and the profiles of individuals in them) and their implications for career progression and TL performance.
- Visuals and definitions of career pathways to MSD TL, including analysis of key stepping stone roles and team structures that encourage promotion from within.
- Consolidated set of support structures and systems for MSD leaders (include existing & future offerings with some analysis of market potential and options for who could or should deliver them).