

> **What makes a good MSD Team Leader?** Feedback from the BEAM community

June 21, 2022

Agenda

1. **Introduction and framing:** why this matters (5 mins)
2. **Preliminary findings:** what we've found (15 mins)
3. **Facilitated small group breakouts:** what this means (45 mins)
4. **Key insights and phase 2:** so what & what's next (25 mins)

Where is this coming from?

- An initiative of the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development's (DCED) Market Systems Development (MSD) Working Group
- Collaboration between the DCED Secretariat, BEAM Exchange and 6 organizations involved in MSD programming:
 - USAID
 - Sida
 - Mercy Corps
 - ILO
 - Vikara Institute
 - The Canopy Lab

Why this matters

- There is a shortage of MSD Team Leaders (TLs)
- There are skewed incentives to propose TLs who meet official criteria but lack the skills and mindset to lead projects effectively
- Biases in who gets selected as a TL – favouring expatriate, white male team leaders, disadvantaging women and minority groups
- MSD TLs are critical to program success, and yet capacity building resources tend to target MSD programme staff rather than TLs

Sources of information and insight

Interviews (March-May 2022)

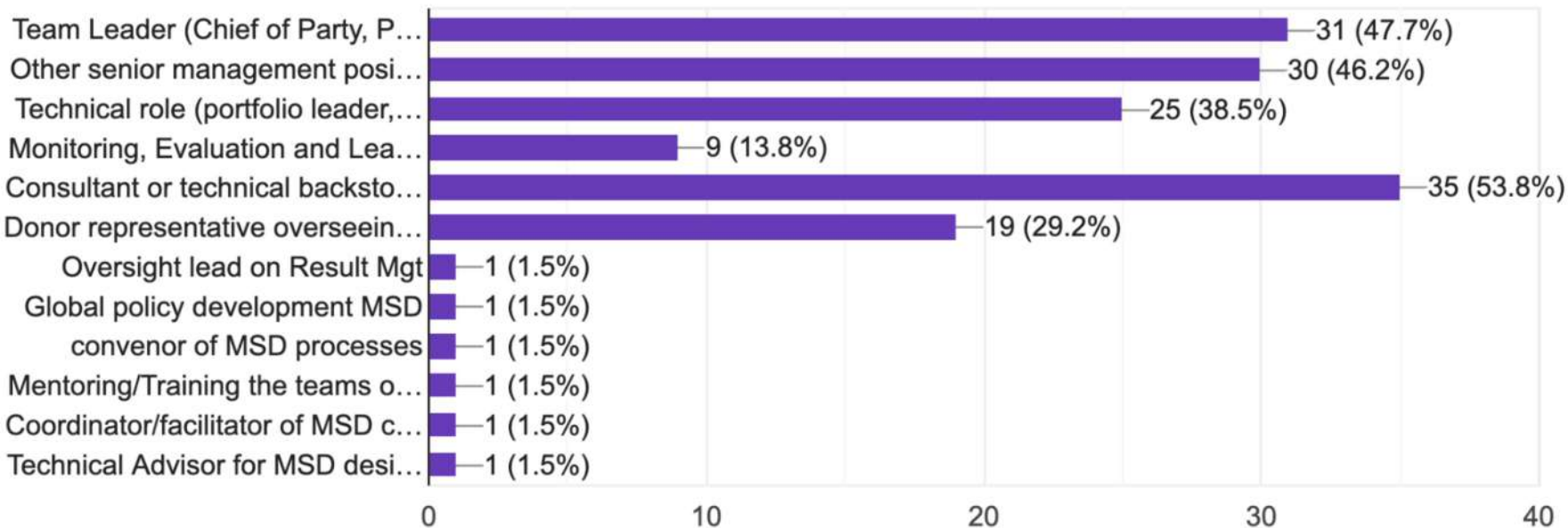
- 10 interviews completed (1 hour each)
- Mix of aspiring, new and experienced TLs
- Broad range of questions:
 - Scope of TL role
 - Career history and key influences
 - Main competencies of a MSD TL
 - Management team structure
 - Approaches to capacity building

Survey (May-June 2022)

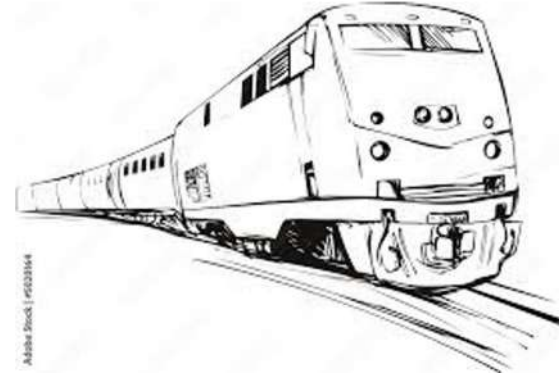
- 65 survey responses
- Mix of donor, implementer and consultant
- 47% have experience as an MSD TL
- Focused set of questions:
 - Priorities from MSD competency framework - what does a TL especially need to be good at?
 - Additional competencies
 - Broader perspectives

Which of the following roles have you played in relation to MSD programmes? (select all that apply)

65 responses



Metaphors for an MSD Team Leader



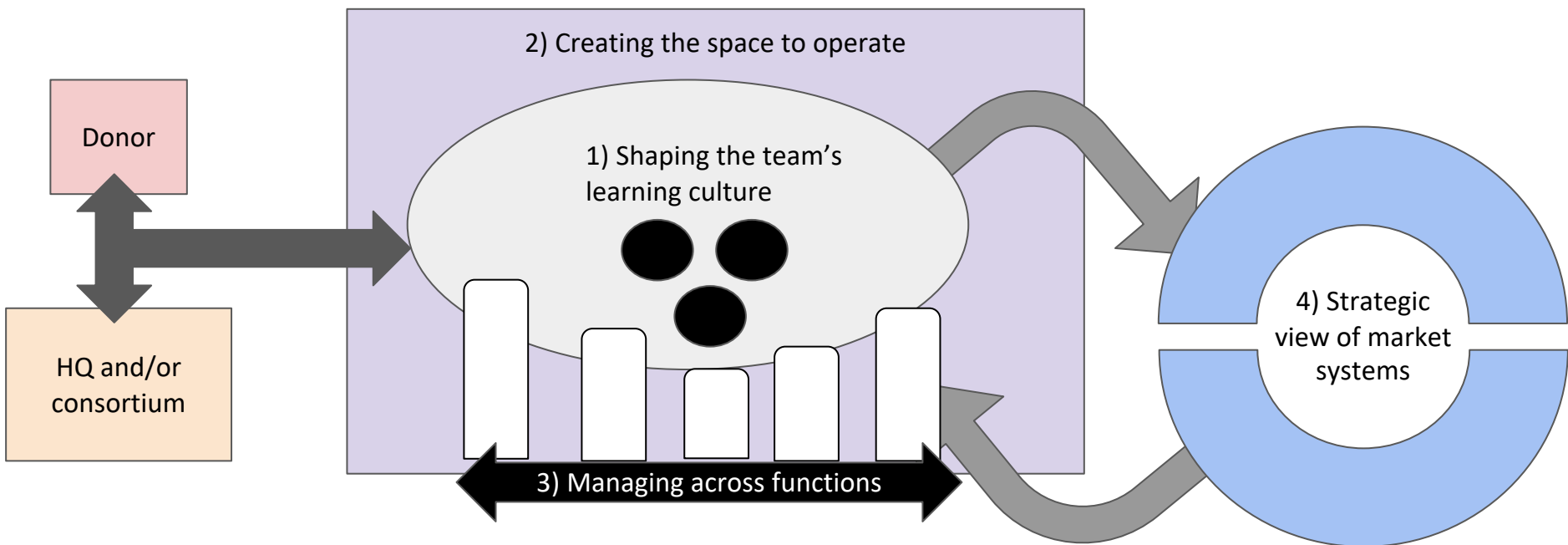
There is no universal set of requirements

- Programme size
- Management structure
- Skills of team
- Generalist vs. specialist
- Building vs. inheriting a team
- Depth of technical knowledge of MSD approach (disagreement)

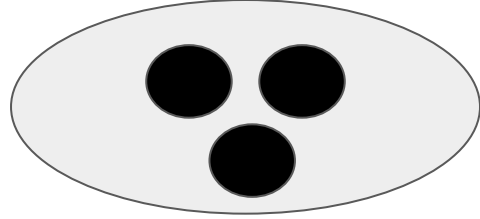
There remains an important question: **What can a Team Leader uniquely do?**

Domains of MSD TL competency

- 1) **Shaping the team's learning culture:** culture, motivation and capacity
- 2) **Creating the space to operate** - politics, relationships and expectations
- 3) **Managing across functions:** integrating HR, operations, finance and MEL
- 4) **Strategic view of market systems:** experimentation, feedback and learning within a broader vision of systemic change
- 5) **Foundational knowledge** - the MSD approach & management implications



5) Foundational knowledge of MSD approach and its management implications



1) Shaping the team's learning culture

- Sense of 'mission' - buy-in to learning, critical thinking, permission to fail
- Coaching and mentoring staff
- Empathy and cross-cultural awareness
- Creating an open flow of information and feedback, space to challenge the TL
- Managing conflict productively

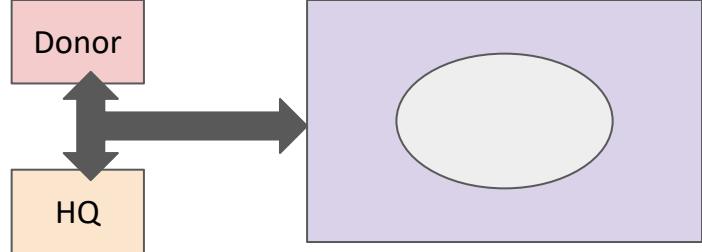
*"People are the **single most important asset** in an MSD program. Recruiting, motivating and retaining great people is key, as is providing opportunities and a structure for them to learn and build their capacity."*

*"TL should have the acumen to create a **culture of coaching and mentoring** among the teams"*

"Have discussions with wider team, not only management. The ability to connect with the technical team usually results in greater respect, information sharing and ability to share some of the crazy and creative ideas without fear."

2) Creating the space to operate

- Effective donor relationships: managing pressures for fast results, communicating MSD, storytelling
- Effective HQ relationships: building trust to shift organizational behaviours to align with MSD principles
- Understanding local politics - in order to be disruptive

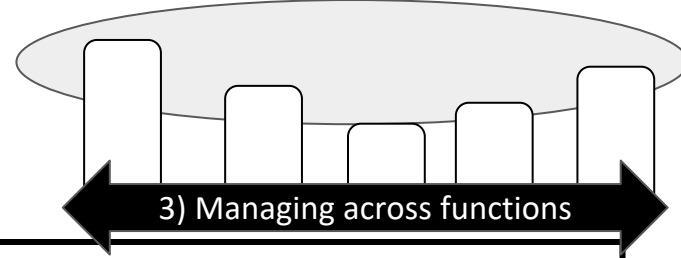


“The team leader needs to be very adept at managing the client, especially since few of the clients really understand MSD (don't have time as they are too busy). Clients are often the main bottleneck in good flexible and adaptive MSD project management.”

“They play a critical intermediary role... Their passion for achieving real change and results will drive them to push their HQ and donor to do what's needed.”

3) Managing across functions

- **Finance:** budgeting/spend rate while balancing flexibility
- **Contracting/procurement:** mechanisms, timelines, manage risks & compliance
- **HR:** recruitment, team structure, performance
- **M&E:** integrating with technical teams to drive learning adaptive management, position MEL/MRM as a source of insights
- **“Deputy”** - share management, sounding board, cultural informant, vulnerability



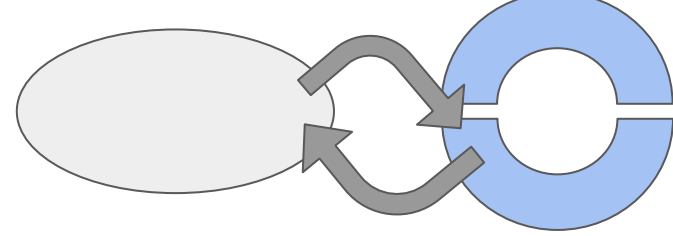
*“MSD programs are notoriously difficult to budget and **expenditure is typically somewhat unpredictable** ... While this can be handled by a skilled finance dept, the TL has to play a role in managing this issue, as donors expect predictability.”*

*“deploy your budget in a way suited to MSD team structuring - **recognise and reward rare capabilities** rather than following rigid processes.”*

*“identify a recruitment strategy that can **filter and test for appropriate skill sets**.”*

*“make sense of and **communicate the signals coming from the M&E team**, help the M&E team and the field teams work together in synergy”*

4) Strategic view of market systems



- Develop and share a vision for how the system might evolve
- Keep team focused on the system rather than specific activities or interventions
- Drive forward in ambiguous contexts while still seeking more information
- Adapt and change, including the power to withdraw funding/partnerships

*"It's easy for staff members to be so immersed in interventions that they lose the systems perspective ... the TL's job is to see the strategic overview and **help the team to make decisions** that will support development of the whole system."*

*"being **sufficiently immersed in details** to manage quality – without disempowering the people responsible for delivering"*

*"provide an **overarching vision** for the project and influence the staff to do the things they need to do."*

"analyse whether a strategy is likely to lead to sustainable behaviour change and 'transformational' system change"

5) Foundational MSD knowledge

- Priority competencies from existing framework:
 - (1) Systems analysis (63%)
 - (2) Critical thinking, foresight & vision (86%)
 - (3) Decision making (80%)
 - (4) Communication (60%)
 - (5) Relationship building (80%)

5) Foundational knowledge of MSD approach and its management implications

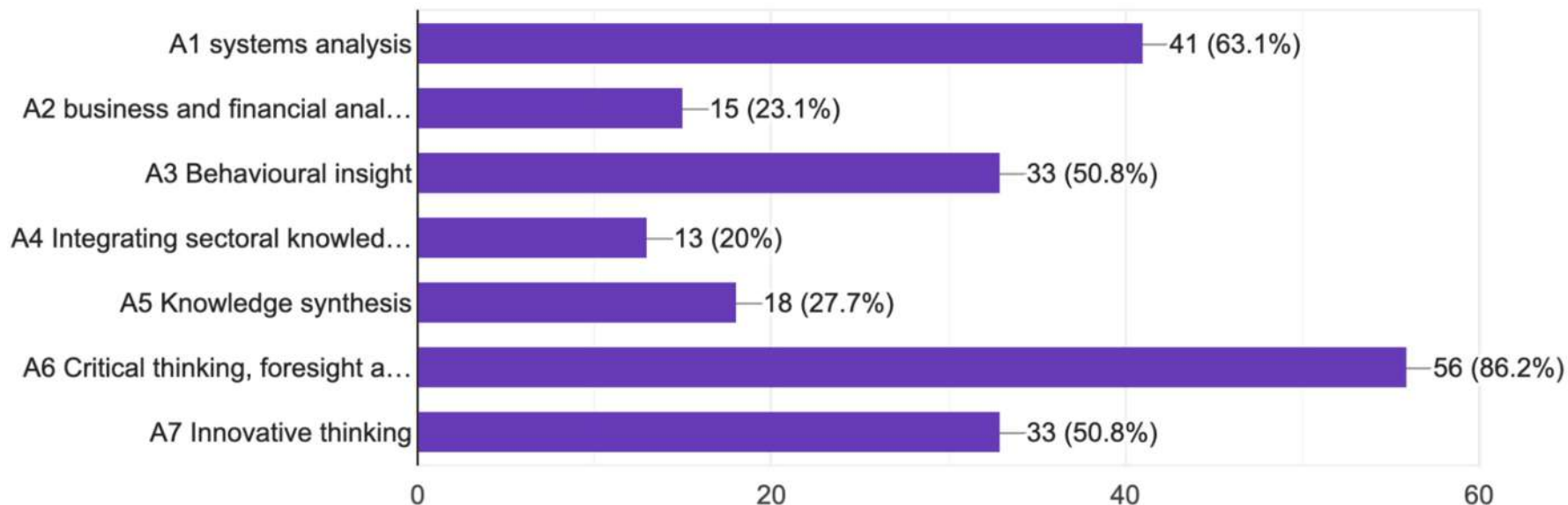
"A good systems thinker is a generalist who can lead a team with a broad spectrum of competencies."

"The best team leaders I've worked with have all or almost all of the competencies. Since effective team leaders play a strong role in mentoring staff members through the process of learning to become a competent MSD practitioner, it is really important they can "walk the talk."

"A strong TL is not so much the technical lead of a programme, but a good manager who is able to bring the best out of her/his team who are the experts in MSD."

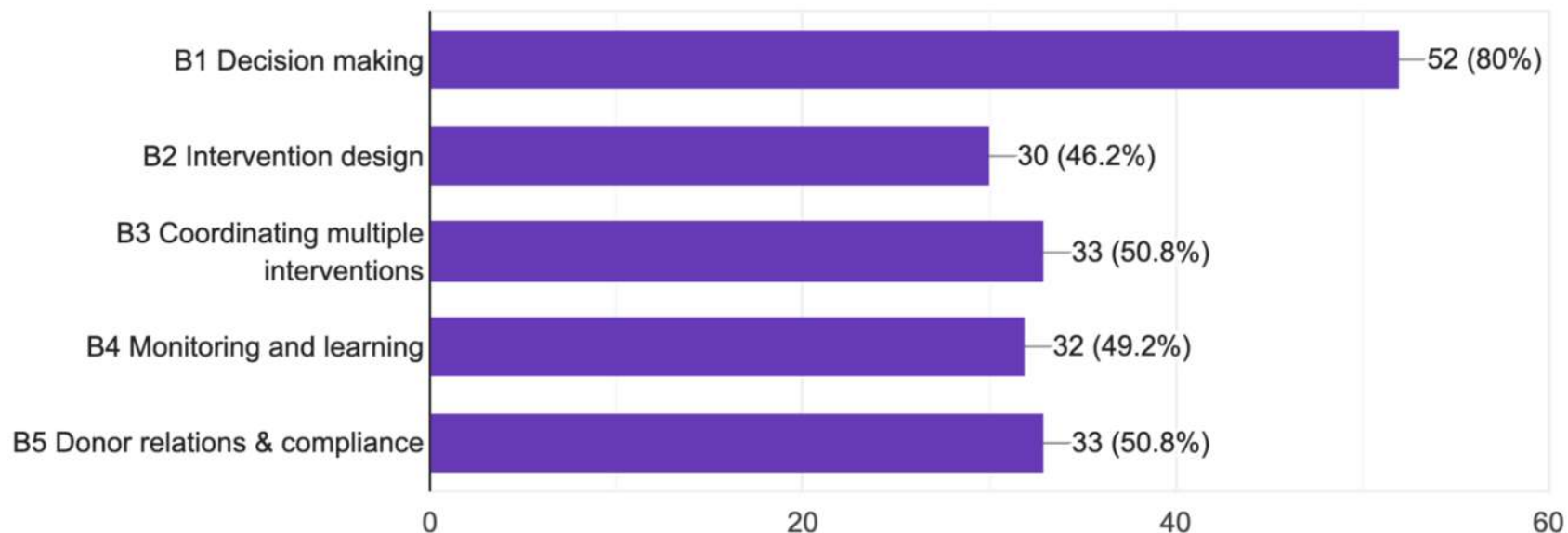
Which of the following Group A competencies (Analysis & Insight) do you think MSD leaders need to be particularly strong on? (select as many as you see fit but try to prioritise 2-3)

65 responses



Which of the Group B competencies (Intervention delivery) do you think MSD TL need to be particularly strong on? (select as many as you see fit but try to prioritise 2-3)

65 responses



Which of the Group C competencies (Teamwork & interaction) do you think MSD leaders need to be particularly strong on? (select as many as you see fit but try to prioritise)

65 responses

