Practitioner Learning Groups (PLGs)

Overcoming Market Systems Development Challenges Together

Call for Applications – Deadline 15 March 2016, 6 PM GMT

Working on a market development program?
Facing an exciting challenge?
Interested in teaming up with other experts facing similar challenges?
Then, Practitioner Learning Groups are for you!

The number of projects using market development approaches to reduce poverty are on the rise. This means that it is very possible that someone out there is facing a challenge that you are also facing. However, time pressure, lack of resources, and other factors can force us to work in isolation when it matters the most: when we must make decisions on what to do here and now.

Project teams have an important wealth of experience and knowledge, but lack of communication with other teams during critical moments of the project translates into missed opportunities to:

- Tap into the collective wisdom of the teams
- Explore valuable alternative practices
- Broaden the team's knowledge base and mobilize new knowledge
- Challenge assumptions
- Capitalize on theoretical, logistic, and budgetary synergies
- Learn through contrast of contexts and strategies
- Build new professional connections
- Enhance the impacts of market facilitation programs

Practitioner Learning Groups, coordinated by The SEEP Network1 with support from the BEAM Exchange2, are designed to help project leaders seize the afore-mentioned opportunities in an efficient, timely and cost-effective way. The PLG coordinators identify fellow practitioners who are working on common issues and challenges, convene and facilitate meetings, bring in external experts when needed, document the collaboration process, and raise the profile of your achievements. This collaboration will take place through structured, time-bound, and facilitated interactions, such as Skype conferences, webinars, and in-person meetings3.

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1 The SEEP Network is a global network of international practitioner organizations dedicated to combating poverty through promoting inclusive markets and financial systems. Members are active in 170 countries and reach nearly 90 million households. Read more at [http://www.seepnetwork.org/](http://www.seepnetwork.org/)

2 The BEAM Exchange is a one-stop shop for sharing knowledge and learning about how market systems approaches can be used to reduce poverty. Its goal is to improve the impact and effectiveness of programs that use these approaches. Read more at [https://beamexchange.org/](https://beamexchange.org/)

3 See below for more details on expected contributions from your team.
In other words, we do the not-so-exciting things so you can focus on overcoming important challenges, experimenting with alternative practices, and innovating with other seasoned implementers.

How can I apply?
Easy! Simply share with us a short description of your project and your role, the most critical challenge you are facing, where you are based, and contact details for us to get in touch.

CLICK HERE TO APPLY!

What types of challenges are you seeking?
We are interested in challenges that strike a balance between practicality and impact. These are the sort of questions we will be asking ourselves when we study your application:

- Can the challenge be overcome collectively better than by each team individually?
- Can it be overcome in a relatively short timeframe (in a matter of months, rather than years)?
- If the challenge is overcome, will this have a significant impact in terms of the potential of the project to reach sustainability and scale?

We are open to any type of challenges - as long as they are related to market systems development program. Do not hold back because you think your challenge is not interesting enough or you have not articulated it well.

Who can submit applications and participate?
You can submit an application on behalf of a project team if:

- Your challenge is linked to a market systems development program that is implementing activities with market actors (no research program, for example).
- The project team (including the project manager) agree with the importance of the challenge you identify.

What contributions are expected from me if my challenge is selected?

- You agree to be directly involved in and invest time in the activities of the PLG.
  - You will invest 4-5 days of your time over 3 months (approx. Mar-May) to prepare for and participate in monthly virtual meetings (Skype, webinar, video conference, etc.) and revise the case study describing the PLG learning process.4
  - You will spend 2-3 days to prepare for and participate in an in-person workshop with the other members of the PLG. Participation in this workshop is compulsory.
- You intend to participate with a spirit of collaboration, respect, creativity, and openness (sharing knowledge within and outside of the team).
- You can mobilize your team around the findings and ideas harvested from the PLG.

Note:
There will be a limited number of scholarships available to SEEP member organizations only to cover travel costs for in-person meetings. If you require financial support in order to

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4 The bulk of the work related to the production of the case study will be done by the facilitator of the PLGs.
participate, please indicate this in your application. The exact terms of this support will be
determined on a case-by-case basis and considering the needs of the other participants.

If you work for an organization that is not a member of SEEP, you could be selected to be
part of a PLG but you will be responsible for all costs related to your participation in the in-
person workshop.

What will happen after I share my team’s challenges?
We will analyze the submissions and work to match you with 2-4 development professionals
facing similar challenges. We will take into account factors such as: type of challenge,
characteristics of the project, sector/subsector, target populations, geographic location, and
relevance for the broader market development field.

We will let you know if you have been selected to be a part of a PLG and the details of the
other members. Through a facilitated process, the group will agree on an agenda and terms
for how the group will interact.

The number of PLGs formed will depend on the number of requests we receive and the
similarities among the various challenges. We hope to form 2-3 PLGs for this pilot. Each
group will have 3-5 people representing an equal number of teams from different
organizations.

The PLGs will have a facilitator to support them with their agenda, logistics, access to
technical assistance, documentation of the process, in-person and virtual meetings, and
communication with external experts.

SEEP will coordinate with member organizations that are keen on supporting this initiative to
contribute with logistics and facilitation of the in-person workshops. The in-person meetings
are designed to contribute to trust-building, networking, local visibility, influence, and access
to local/regional experts.

As mentioned above, a limited number of scholarships will be available to support
participation of SEEP members in an in-person workshop.

I am a senior manager – why should I let my team leader participate?
Becoming part of the PLGs will give your team leader a unique opportunity to expand
knowledge, build capacity and skills, and expand professional networks.

Your team may be facing critical challenges in this precise moment that need to be
overcome for the project to achieve its objectives. This initiative is a unique opportunity for
team leaders to collaborate with experienced practitioners from market development projects
and top-class external experts at a relatively small marginal cost to your organization.

A facilitator - funded by this initiative- will document the learning and innovation journey of
the PLGs and do the heavy lifting of producing a case study that will be a valuable resource
for your own and other organizations and donors. The participating team leader, the project
team members, and your organization will be acknowledged in the case study. The case
studies will be widely publicized through the SEEP Network and the BEAM Exchange
channels and partners.