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Leading Through Learning  
Global Platform



# USAID Higher Education Learning Network Steering Group

## Terms of Reference

*\*This document is derived from the Master Networks and Hubs Terms of Reference and is subject to change.*

## Background

### *The USAID Leading through Learning Global Platform*

The USAID Leading Through Learning Global Platform (LTLGP) is a global education learning system for USAID and its partners to enhance thought leadership and education program quality. Our vision is to elevate the experience of the field by providing avenues for local, regional, and global knowledge generation and sharing. We do this by bringing USAID together with international and local implementing partners, researchers, donors, private sector actors, representatives of other education networks, and partner country government leaders in a system of global Learning Networks and Regional Hubs.

### *The USAID Higher Education Learning Network*

The USAID Higher Education Learning Network (HELN) advances scholarship and thought leadership in higher education, supports capacity development, engages members in peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and provides opportunities for professional development through formal tools, informal networks, and connection to mentors. In addition, HELN supports knowledge generation, synthesis,

translation, and usage by identifying and engaging experts to advance adaptive, responsive learning agendas and questions at regional and global levels. USAID Learning Networks like HELN help establish equitable structures for gathering and evaluating learning and regional emerging innovations that feed into the global evidence/knowledge base—thus facilitating linkages between emerging topical areas.

## **HELN Steering Group Purpose and Role**

The HELN Steering Group (SG) will *steer* the Learning Network towards achieving the objectives and values of LTLGP, as aligned with the LTLGP mission. SG members do not project manage the HELN; rather, they guide the Learning Network goals by collaborating with the HELN Learning Network Lead to facilitate the achievement of a sector-driven, member-oriented annual work plan.

More specifically, the role of SG members is to:

- Articulate the objectives for the HELN based on the state of the sector and support the development of an annual work plan for the network, in alignment with LTLGP's objectives and higher education and related sector needs
- Agree annually on an SG Charter, including ways of working
- Produce analysis, decisions, directives, and opinions that assist in achieving both the HELN objectives broadly, as well as the HELN annual work plan
- Represent the HELN in external fora and facilitate connections, as relevant
- Represent the voices and perspectives of the HELN Membership on the SG, representing functions (e.g., researchers, USAID implementing partners, and subgrantees) and in geographic location (e.g., regions and countries where projects are delivered)
- Be willing to work with other SG members from diverse stakeholder groups, including the SG of the other USAID Learning Networks
- Participate and perform the SG work in a respectful and timely fashion, and adhere to the co-developed Charter

## **Service Length and Time Commitment**

HELN Steering Group members are requested to choose between one or two years of assignment. The co-chairs (chosen by the SG upon establishment) will serve for a one-year term, with possibility for renewal if re-elected by the SG members.

Time commitment is envisioned to be **two days per month**.

### *Estimated Meetings Schedule*

- HELN SG members will convene for an initial virtual meeting to co-develop an SG Charter to detail ways of working together,—as aligned with this Terms of Reference document— and other parameters for collaborating.
- Quarterly meetings will be convened and take place either virtually, with no more than two meetings in-person in a given year. The decision to meet in-person or virtually will be guided by the LTLGP Secretariat, in coordination with USAID, and will depend on budgetary and public health considerations.
- Once in a project cycle year, budget permitting, all USAID Learning Network SGs will convene together, allowing for inter-learning network dialogues and planning. Minutes and priorities will be shared across all Regional Hub Network Chapters.

### **HELN Steering Group Charter**

The below is an initial draft of items for the HELN SG Charter to be discussed and finalized during the first HELN SG meeting. HELN SG members will create and then annually endorse a charter, which includes SG ways of working. In addition, it will include the following contents:

- Three sub-objectives of the HELN, aligned with LTLGP's mission, vision, and three objectives
- HELN status reporting preferences (content and timing)
- SG decision-making process and documentation, both in and between meetings
- Whether and how the guidelines on meetings and time commitment and length of service will be modified
- SG problem-solving and conflict-resolution protocol
- Preferred method of document storage and communication platform
- Note-taking of decisions, which should include: the person accountable, the persons affected, the persons to be informed, the deadline
- How and when to modify the Charter
- Define SG measures of success and how to track them

### **Steering Group Composition**

The HELN SG will have at least 12 members, who will be sourced through a call for membership applications (see the last page of this Terms of Reference document). Each member may have an alternate to ensure full attendance for all meetings.

Steering Groups will include:

- A Learning Network Leader, the convener, not the SG decision maker
- A member-nominated Chair, as the convener and decision maker in times of disagreement
- A Regional Hub Coordinator from each LTLGP Regional Hub, as available
- Two HELN Chapter Coordinators selected from the HELN Chapters in each Regional Hub, as available
- A representative from previous HELN SGs (for a minimum of one year)
- One to two members representing USAID Mission staff, serving as a Foreign Service National (FSN) or Foreign Service Officer (FSO)
- At least one youth member currently enrolled in a higher education institution, with preference given to a student from a USAID partner country
- One member representing higher education institutions, associations, coalitions systems, or networks located in a USAID partner country
- Four to five additional members from USAID and partners with deep knowledge of good practices in higher education programming inclusive of the categories above
- A representative from USAID (i.e., a subject matter expert [SME]), recommended by the USAID Contracting Officer Representative (COR)

SG Members share a common purpose. In line with this core principle, the HELN Steering Group will seek to include membership from the following groups from USAID partners, subgrantees, and others:

- Combination of executive leadership, mid-level managers, and practitioners
- Representatives based in lower middle-income or low-income countries
- People of color
- Indigenous people
- Gender non-conforming people
- Academic experts and researchers
- Learning and evaluation experts
- Communications, advocacy, social, and behavior change professionals
- Implementers
- Youth leaders, especially young women and youth from marginalized communities

## Steering Group Application Process

The LTLGP Secretariat will employ the below process for recruitment and onboarding of USAID HELN SG members:

1. USAID HELN SG Terms of Reference and Application (this document) will be shared through individual and public invitations through LTLGP network membership.
2. The priority application deadline is **January 25, 2022**, with the aim to finalize the selection of SG members by February 2023.
3. The USAID Leading through Learning Network Development Team will select members according to the composition and diversity, inclusion, and access criteria above.
4. Selected and not selected applicants will be notified by email.
5. A first meeting date for the group will be chosen together with selected members to agree on the HELN SG Charter.

## Steering Group Application Process

The LTLGP Secretariat will employ the below process for recruitment and onboarding of USAID HELN SG members.

1. The HELN SG Terms of Reference and application materials will be shared through individual and publication invitations through LTLGP Learning Network Membership.
2. The application will be open for two weeks, with a possibility of extension to an additional week if sufficient applicant pool is not met.
3. The USAID Leading through Learning Network Development Team will select members according to the composition and diversity, inclusion, and access criteria above.
4. Selected and not selected applicants will be notified via email within three weeks of application submission.
5. A first meeting date for the group will be chosen together with selected members to agree on the HELN Steering Group Charter.

## Steering Group Application Form

Thank you for your interest in joining the USAID Higher Education Learning Network Steering Group!

Email Jennifer Lebron, the HELN Learning Network Lead, at [usaidHELN@edc.org](mailto:usaidHELN@edc.org) for next steps in the application process.

We anticipate to conclude selection by February 2023. Our selection criteria and process are designed to identify SG representatives who are:

- committed to localization and collective impact
- from a range of professional functions and levels
- of under-represented groups
- technical experts in higher education programs, research, and evidence
- at a decision-making level authority in their agencies