APPLYING AGILE PRINCIPLES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT M&E

MERL Tech
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POTENTIAL MODELS

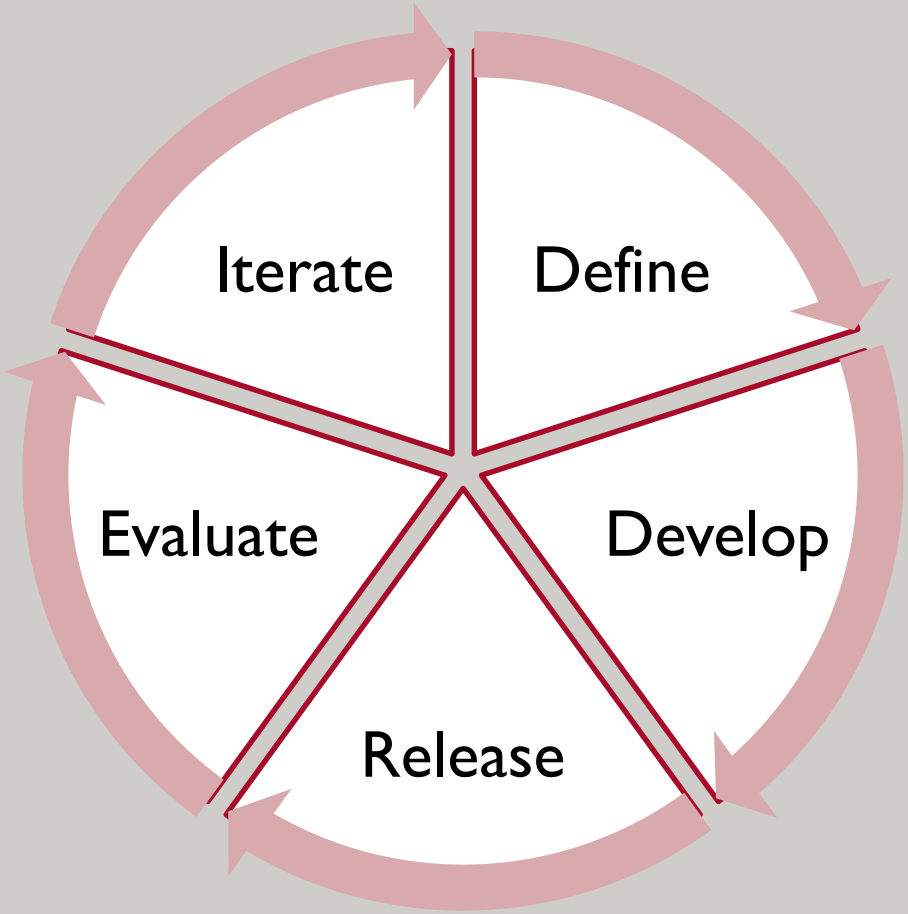
- **Agile**
  - Methodology for software development that arose in 2001
  - Deliver continuous value to clients by shipping new software frequently in smaller chunks
  - Gather data to iteratively improve both the product and team performance/processes
- **Lean**
  - Methodology for removing waste/cost
  - Began with Toyota manufacturing, later adopted for start-ups and now the social sector
  - Hypothesize, Experiment, Iterate

AGILE BACKGROUND

- Reaction against massive long-term projects
- #1 Priority: Provide customers value through continuous delivery of software/new features
- Deliver working software frequently
- Keep business people and developers working together throughout
- Constant Iteration:
  - Collect customer feedback to improve product
  - Reflect on how to become more effective and implement changes to achieve that

See http://agilemanifesto.org/principles.html for more details

AGILE PROCESS OVERVIEW



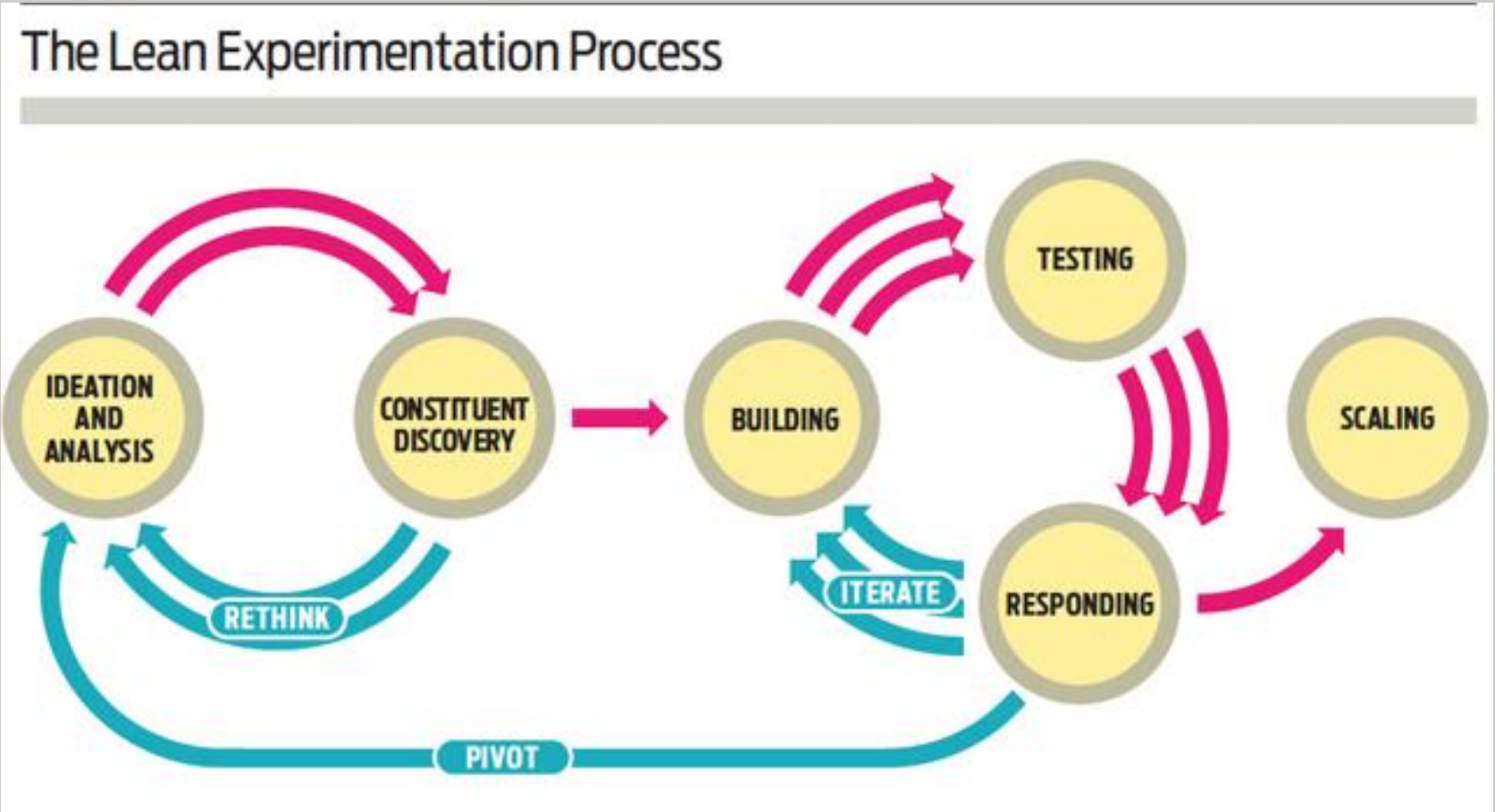
DEVRESULTS PROCESS

- Ongoing backlog of potential work
- Rough prioritization by Team Data → Episode Queue
- Product Owner: Voice of the Customer
- Minimum Viable Product (MVP) + Iterations
- Episodes (roughly 1 month)
- Release as available with help materials and blog post
  - Optional: beta testing and/or advanced notice

LESSONS LEARNED

- Seeing our work as a **continuous iterative** process removes some pressure to think of EVERY use case initially
- Focus always on a **Minimum Viable Product**
- You need an almost maniacal focus on **delivering value to customers**
- **Blog-driven development** helped us make this shift
- **Ruthlessly prioritize**
- The **Product Owner** is essential to own/make decisions on the effort
- Generating solutions MUST be a **collaborative** process
- Find ways to build quality, review, and testing into **everyday processes**
- Limit the time **between** various phases
- Find ways to **test** riskier ideas

LEAN EXPERIMENTATION PROCESS



Taken from: http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_lean_experimentation

WHAT IS COLLABORATING, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING?

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) is USAID's approach to organizational learning and adaptive management.

Strategic **collaboration** with key stakeholders leads to new insights and partnerships.

Systematic **learning** provides the knowledge we need to make better informed decisions.

Collaborating and learning enable **adapting**—our ability to make adjustments that continuously improve programming.

Systematic, intentional, and resourced CLA enables USAID missions and partners to continuously improve development programming.

WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?

Problem:

- LEARN's goal is to support USAID in more systematically integrating collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) into its work, but:
  - Mission staff don't "get" CLA.
  - Institutional barriers are enormous.

Proposed Solution:

- Facilitate an organizational change process using the CLA Maturity Matrix – a tool that looks at both integration CLA in USAID processes and enabling conditions within a mission.

COLLABORATING

LEARNING

ADAPTING

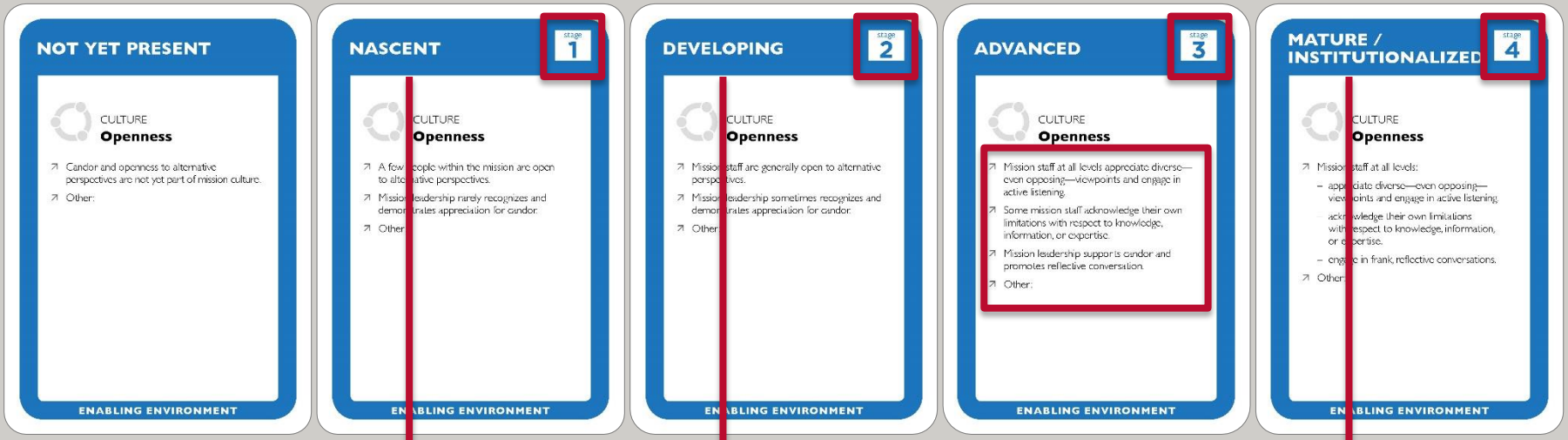
APPLYING LEAN EXPERIMENTATION

Lean	Development Speak	What We Did
Constituent Discovery: Get *feedback*	Community engagement, assessments, listening sessions, focus groups, interviews	Stocktaking exercise with 14 USAID missions
Ideation and Analysis: Determine your *value hypothesis*	Data analysis, brainstorming, develop a theory of change and results framework, program design	Analyze stocktaking feedback, determine initial strategy to solve challenges

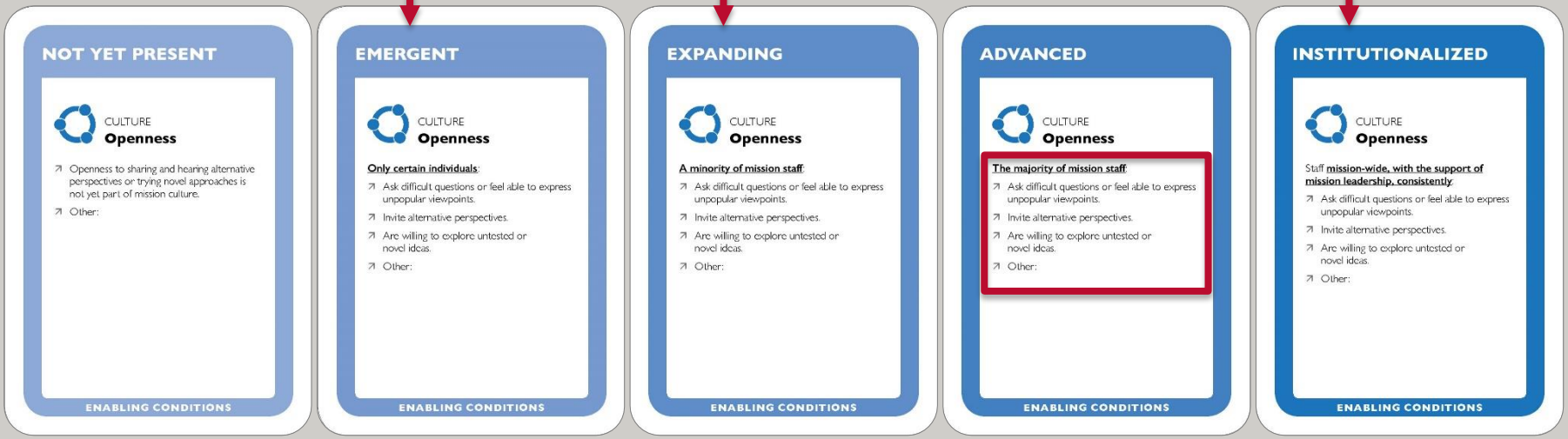
APPLYING LEAN EXPERIMENTATION

Lean	Development Speak	What We Did
Build: Create a *Minimum Viable Product (MVP)*	Depends on sector – could be building a product, tool, communications material, producing architectural or engineering model	Developed versions 1-4 of the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Maturity Matrix
Test: Put your *riskiest hypothesis* to the test	Program implementation, pilots, demonstration projects, monitoring	Tested versions 4 – 6 of the CLA Maturity Matrix with USAID missions and partners
Respond: Determine *next steps* based on data	Stop, adapt, and/or scale implementation	Incorporate CLA Maturity Matrix as a reference in updated ADS, create Version 7

VERSION 4



VERSION 6



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- Not knowing what something should or could be is incredibly liberating.
- Flexibility from leadership is critical.
- Need people on the team who are flexible and comfortable with ambiguity.
- Don't make your minimum viable product (MVP) too perfect.
- Don't forget that observation is an important monitoring tool when determining if your MVP is viable.
- Get constant feedback, document what you've changed, and share those changes with constituents.
- This process can be applied almost across the board.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

- Working in small groups, use the USAID solicitations to develop a lean experimentation approach for the USAID/Jordan water program or the USAID/Indonesia gender-based violence program.