Introduction to Intergovernmental Learning Exchange to Advance Data-Driven Decision-Making (I-LEAD)

Overview

What is I-LEAD?

I-LEAD is an immersive, problem-solving set of interactive activities that engages participants in generating and sharing knowledge and developing skills needed to facilitate the successful implementation of an effective and sustainable national digital health ecosystem. The I-LEAD workshop facilitates the initial phases of a multistakeholder, multisectoral, and enterprise approach to the ongoing operationalization of effective and sustainable national digital health systems. I-LEAD enhances participants’ capacity to develop strategies and approaches to address essential informatics problems their countries face, related to the following: 1) effective digital health governance and leadership; 2) development of a skilled informatics workforce; and 3) the meaningful design, development, implementation, and evaluation of health information systems. As PEPFAR transitions its programs to host governments, the I-LEAD program provides a template for countries to systematically and collaboratively address complex program ownership and sustainability challenges.

An I-LEAD workshop aims to:

* Advance the capacity of senior and mid-level managers to design, champion and lead digital health initiatives,
* Develop informatics capacity among health professionals (informatics and non-informatics) through collaborative and experiential learning,
* Encourage discussion of challenging issues, difficult decisions, and national priorities,
* Stimulate innovative and cross-cutting technical collaborations that enable modernization of data systems
* Promote membership in informatics communities of practice, and
* Focus on developing a shared vision and strategies that can be translated into implementable projects.

Stakeholders consist of senior to mid-level leadership staff from public health agencies/organizations essential in developing informatics vision and strategies to address priority informatics problems. These goals are achieved by promoting effective digital health governance and leadership at the national level, the development of a skilled informatics workforce, and the meaningful design, development, implementation, and evaluation of health information systems. The envisioned outcomes for these activities include:

* Sustainable national digital health development that supports PEPFAR and national programs beyond HIV,
* Improved in-country informatics workforce and resources (including financing) to address scale-up activities,
* Shared roadmap to improving digital health, and
* Engage in communities of practice that share knowledge and best practices to support PEPFAR programs.

**Goal**

Champion the advancement of digital health capacity and drive digital transformation across the health sector.

Objectives

* Build skills to develop, validate, and implement digital health strategies and policies aligned with country-specific strategic objectives.
* Enable strategies for workforce retention and knowledge preservation across various sectors, including private, to ensure long-term sustainability.
* Develop management skills in organizing resources to achieve digital health strategic priorities and solve complex informatics challenges.
* Enhance communication skills for engaging diverse stakeholders and promote inter-agency collaborations.
* Foster innovative solutions in digital health via peer learning and exchange for cross-cutting technical collaborations.

Focus: shared vision & strategy

* I-LEAD focuses on a shared vision and strategy that:
	+ Encourages discussion of challenging issues, difficult decisions, gap assessment results, national priorities, digital health strategies, and roadmaps.
	+ Includes leaders and managers who will champion informatics in their own country (e.g., ministries of health, implementing partners).
	+ Blends foundational and problem-based content, practice exercises, and group work to create a workshop unique to each cohort.

**I-LEAD governing principles**

*Figure 1. I-LEAD governing principles*

I-LEAD intended audience

I-LEAD is intended for senior managers in public health and digital health who are involved in the implementation of policies, strategies, and standards for digital transformation and data system modernization.

Participating organizations

Ministries of health, ministries of digitalization and information technology, academic institutions, and digital health implementing nongovernmental organizations.

I-LEAD framework and tools

I-LEAD utilizes the ISHO framework (Figure 2) to streamline collaborative problem-solving efforts.

**Informatics-Savvy Health Organization**

**Vision, Policy, and Governance**

**Skilled Workforce**

**Effective Information system**

Figure 2. ISHO strategic framework

Ministries of health and national public health institutes need to be informatics-savvy if we are to measurably and sustainably strengthen health systems for digital health to control the epidemic and improve patient and population health outcomes.

The ISHO framework establishes:

* Core concepts essential to development of informatics-savvy health organizations
* A systematic approach to measure progress and gaps in digital health development
* A collaborative and safe environment to develop shared vision and strategy to address priority challenges
* Participatory tools that build relevant evidence-based action

I-LEAD also utilizes the Four Thinking Hats concept, which includes systems thinking, design thinking, strategic thinking, and evaluative thinking.

Intended benefits of the I-LEAD program

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stakeholder | Benefit category | Benefit description |
| Government (ministries / departments of health) | Leadership development | Cultivates change leaders capable of managing digital health investments to strengthen systems (e.g., UHC initiatives). |
| Strategic alignment | Creates a shared vision and strategy across ministries to close digital health gaps. |
| Contextualized learning | Embeds experiential learning directly into country and institutional contexts, ensuring relevance and immediate applicability. |
| Cross-cultural innovation | Builds intergovernmental innovation capacity and cultural competency for regional collaboration. |
| Implementing partners | Enhanced collaboration | Improves dialogue and partnerships among ministries, government agencies, and implementing bodies. |
| Regional / national health informatics networks | Streamlined coordination | Strengthens communication channels and coordination mechanisms among regional and national informatics networks. |
| Network capacity | Empowers networks to share best practices, harmonize standards, and scale successful digital health interventions. |

Reimagined I-LEAD training-of-trainers model

In today’s global health environment, I-LEAD is shifting to an implementation approach designed to support governments and implementing partners, including national and regional health informatics associations, in adopting and implementing the I-LEAD program independently. Furthermore, the integration of PEPFAR programs into local health systems introduces both cross-cutting and context-dependent challenges (e.g., financial sustainability, workforce gaps and retention, governance alignment). Meeting these challenges calls for collaborative approaches and a mindset that emphasizes systems strengthening and country leadership (e.g., country-led versus donor-led).

To enable this, the model provides “Adaptable I-LEAD,” which is a comprehensive, customizable capacity and partnership strengthening package. It is a holistic approach that requires effective project management and advocacy guidance.

Key features of the reimagined I-LEAD approach:

* **Prepackaged, adaptable resources:** Ready-to-use toolkits, guides, slide decks, and templates for quick adaptation in various contexts.
* **Contextual flexibility:** Adaptable to country needs and languages, hosted by champions like ministries of health, digital health agencies, or public health institutes.
* **Flexible delivery:** Materials are primarily prepared for in-person delivery. Champions and custodians can adapt this to other modalities to increase access and sustainability.
* **Sustainability plan:** Allows for onboarding an in-country implementation team (implementers and facilitators), embed I-LEAD into continuing professional development programs.
* **Collaboration:** Explore partnerships with digital health networks (HELINA, AeHIN, RECAINSA), academic institutions, digital health hubs, and institutions.

**I-LEAD roadmap**

The I-LEAD roadmap provides an in-depth understanding of the nature and scope of I-LEAD activities including timelines, resources needed, and when to use available guidance and content. It empowers countries to independently operationalize and implement the I-LEAD training program to achieve long-term sustainability and impact in national digital health programming. The roadmap defines the steps, timelines, and resources needed to deliver a successful training program.

# Adaptable I-LEAD

Adaptable I-LEAD is a comprehensive, customizable capacity strengthening package designed to support governments and implementing partners, including national and regional health informatics associations, in adopting and implementing the I-LEAD program independently. It includes not only the I-LEAD technical course content, but also an implementation guide to support the entire process, from initial engagement and workshop logistics to post-course evaluation, as well as facilitation guides aimed at strengthening the capacity of course facilitators.