

January 16, 2026 Participatory Methods CoP Meeting Notes

This was the first meeting of the Participatory Methods CoP. Heather Esper of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan and Abdullahi Ibrahim of LEAP Africa gave an overview of the group, including the objectives, meeting frequency, group expectations and rules of engagement, and how to suggest topics for future meetings.

Attendees were then asked to introduce themselves and what made them interested in joining the working group. Key themes on why attendees joined the CoP include:

1. Looking forward to the camaraderie of being in regular dialogue with others to learn how to strengthen how they use participatory approaches. This includes learning from first hand experience from others in the group, as well as sharing resources and adding new tools to their toolbox
2. Utilizing the group as a brain trust to discuss common challenges and explore solutions together

One of the presenters from LEAP Africa, Akolade Oladipupo, pointed out the need for robust methodologies that can adapt to uncertain and complex contexts are needed more than ever and participatory approaches can do just that. He pointed out the need to increase uptake and utilization of evidence generated to inform programs and design, and that participatory approaches foster a sense of ownership such that people contribute to the design and collection of data, they also build a sense of ownership to actually want to utilize the evidence.

Another attendee said they were looking for inspiration from others to make learning with partners that they fund less donor-centric, more genuine, more needs-based.

After introductions Chukwuemeka Okeke and Akolade Oladipupo from LEAP Africa then presented the OCAT participatory methodology followed by Q&A and discussion.

Please find a link to the slides [here](#).

Key resources shared during the presentation include:

1. [OCAT \(Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool\)](#) – OCAT 2.0
2. [MSH – MOST \(Management and Organizational Sustainability Tool\)](#)
3. [MSH – FinMAT \(Financial Management Assessment Tool\)](#) – “The Manager” issue introducing FINMAT ([Alternate FinMAT resource page](#))
4. [McKinsey – People & Organizational Performance insights page](#)
5. [USAID OCA](#)

Yaquta Fatehi from WDI shared in the chat at the end of the webinar that when time is short, multi-purpose tools are helpful: *“Reflection: 1) For me what really stands out is this is a multi-purpose tool! It can be used in so many ways based on what LEAP has shared. I find that especially with entrepreneurs, it is easier to just have a one-stop shop tool at least in the early stages of the company - I counted at the min, org capacity-building, MEL, and even investment readiness! 2) And I love that it kicks off with an info session and that the participants can reflect and raise challenges at the start itself. And that the team is working so closely rather than just dump the tool on them.”*