# INTEGRITY INSIGHTS

# Organisational learning at scale: reflections from the Prosperity Fund

**Read Time:** 15 minutes

**Client:** HMG

**Project timeframe:** 2017-2021

## Integrity's role

Prosperity Fund Evaluation and Learning (PFEL) services contract in consortium with prime Tetra Tech and partner NIRAS-LTS International, providing thematic, programme and fund-level evaluations, as well as learning processes and initiatives.

## What changed?

Our learning strategy allowed us to respond to opportunities that connected different aspects of the Prosperity Fund. By identifying cross-programme learning that aligned with the needs of individual project teams and packaging this in ways that resonated with different parts of the Fund, we were able to impact thinking and support new ways of working.

The £1.2 billion Prosperity Fund was a key example of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) delivered at scale. The Fund had multiple, interconnected components and nonlinear pathways to impact. Because of this complexity, the role of learning was elevated to be an integral part of the Fund's monitoring and evaluation system.

Integrity, in consortium with prime Tetra Tech and partner NIRAS-LTS International, delivered the Prosperity Fund Evaluation and Learning (PFEL) services contract between 2017 and 2021, providing thematic, programme and fund-level evaluations, as well as learning processes and initiatives, across the Prosperity Fund.

Integrity learning specialists Adrian Bannister and Dulce Pedroso were core members of the PFEL team responsible for learning and communications. This was a function that brought together expertise in digital platform development, content curation and publishing, knowledge management and learning facilitation. In this impact story, they share key learning about how organisational learning became part of the fabric of the Fund.

## The challenge: great minds don't think alike

The Prosperity Fund was a portfolio of 27 multi-year programmes spread across over 30 middle-income countries and delivered by more than ten government departments and agencies. A key challenge was how to maintain a view of the bigger picture while providing services that are timely and relevant for individual programmes and help them to learn from each other.

The main stakeholders involved, including the Fund management team within the Cabinet Office-based Joint Funds Unit (JFU) and the individual programme management teams spread across the globe, often had very particular and different learning needs. The fact that individual programmes started implementation at different points added to the challenge.

## Integrity's response: adding value in everyday work

To provide bespoke services to meet the divergent needs of our target audiences our everyday work typically involved a combination of three key activity areas: hosting learning; doing learning, and then packaging and sharing learning across the network.

### HOSTING LEARNING

We provided the infrastructure to host discussions. We designed, built and maintained a dedicated learning platform PFLearning. The platform provided a shared digital home for all Prosperity Fund staff to convene, share and discuss their experiences and findings. Through the What's on PFLearning newsletter we curated and disseminated key content, such as central guidance from the JFU, PFEL evaluative outputs and learning products. We also successfully piloted the use of PFLearning as an e-learning platform that augmented the Fund's internal capabilities. In 2019 the Independent Commission for Aid Impact recognised the success of PFLearning.

### DOING LEARNING

We facilitated and supported online discussions. Together with government technical specialists, we set up and ran communities of practice on some of the most popular themes that related to the work of the project teams – including Value for Money, Communications, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. The live events and web discussions organised by our team were popular and became an effective way for Prosperity Fund staff from different programmes working in different departments to access synthesised knowledge and to benefit from peer-to-peer learning.
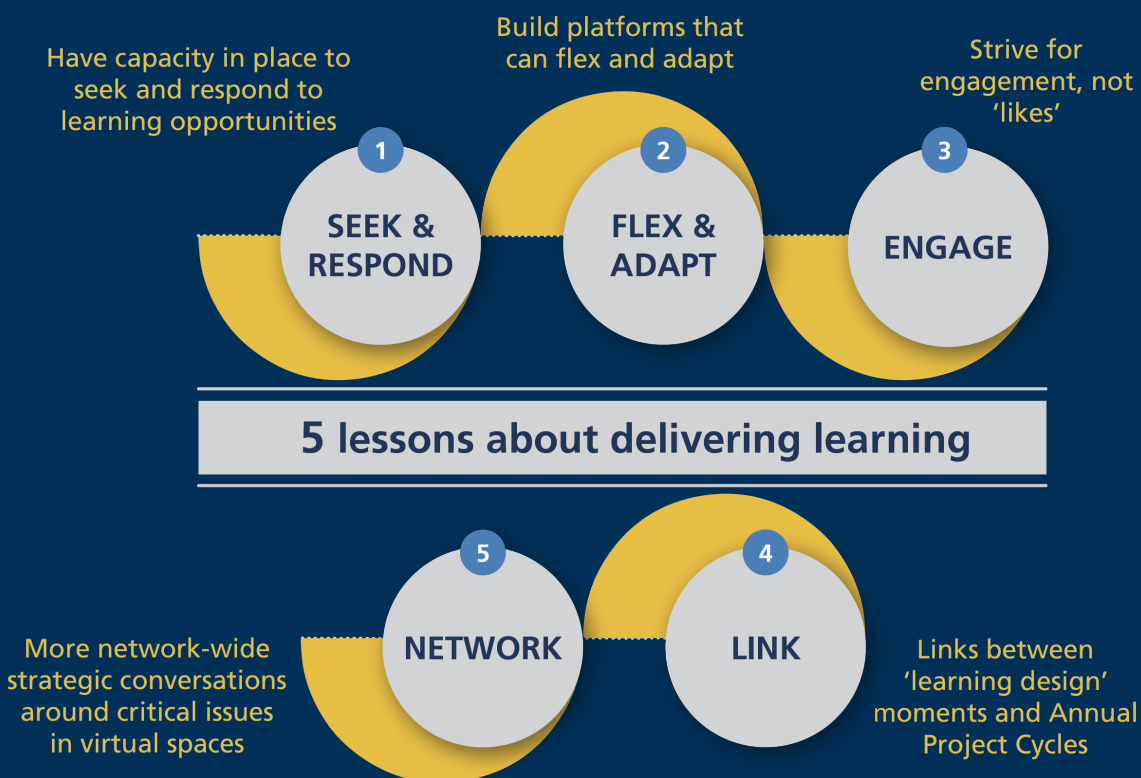
For example, in spring 2019 the Brazil programme team flagged to the JFU that they wanted to learn how other teams were scaling their interventions. We collaborated with the then FCO's Economists Unit in London to design and convene a three-day network online discussion. The event used the PFLearning platform and stimulated over 130 posts from the network on scaling and challenges and implications for monitoring, evaluation and learning. We synthesised the findings and recommendations and shared these with the participants as well as senior stakeholders.

### SHARING LEARNING

We sought to meet the diverse and evolving needs of our audiences during the life of the Fund by offering a suite of products available through the PFLearning platform. Alongside traditional evaluation reports, we helped produce short, accessible summaries aimed at senior stakeholders. To encourage project teams to engage with the learning emerging from

# Creating a learning service with impact

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Have capacity in place to seek and respond to learning opportunities

Build platforms that can flex and adapt

Strive for engagement, not 'likes'

**1** SEEK & RESPOND

**2** FLEX & ADAPT

**3** ENGAGE

## 5 lessons about delivering learning

**5** NETWORK

**4** LINK

More network-wide strategic conversations around critical issues in virtual spaces

Links between 'learning design' moments and Annual Project Cycles

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the evaluations across the programme, we introduced bite-sized learning products in different formats from animations and talking head videos to audio recordings and infographics. The client found the approach to learning products accessible, inventive and carefully considered.

## Lessons about delivering learning

Our learning strategy allowed us to respond to opportunities that connected different aspects of the Prosperity Fund. By identifying cross-programme learning that aligned with the needs of individual project teams and packaging this in ways that resonated with different parts of the Fund, we were able to impact thinking and support new ways of working. Here are five key lessons we learnt about creating a learning service that has impact.

### LESSON 1

#### HAVE CAPACITY IN PLACE TO SEEK AND RESPOND TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

From the start, we resourced a dedicated learning function within PFEL with a mission to 'be useful and used'. We sought out and responded to opportunities to be useful to a range of stakeholders and delivered services and products which appealed to our target audiences and helped them to enhance programme delivery.

### LESSON 2

#### BUILD PLATFORMS THAT CAN FLEX AND ADAPT

Our experience from the Prosperity Fund provides a case for why digital platforms must support responsive and flexible delivery. The PFLearning online platform played a critical role in this regard. It provided a highly modular and flexible architecture to rapidly build and

## Written by

**Dulce Pedroso**
Senior Manager,
Design & Learning

**Adrian Bannister**
Senior Expert, Learning

## Technical support

**Dr Anila Channa**
Head of Monitoring,
Evaluation & Learning

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**Info@Integrityglobal.com**

deploy bespoke content, collaboration and exchange functions. This was key to our ability to support initiatives that were not specified at the outset e.g. to create new communities of practice or to have a dedicated Covid-19 crisis response resource repository.

## LESSON 3

### STRIVE FOR ENGAGEMENT, NOT 'LIKES'

In trying to meet the learning needs of various audiences with limited resources, it was tempting to try and create one-size-fits-all products which have broad appeal but limited engagement. We quickly realised that a more targeted approach was most effective. We actively sought and responded to feedback gathered during learning events to steer the content of products so that they meet the needs of the participants. Where sufficient resources were available, presenting viewpoints of programme teams via blogs, vlogs, and podcasts is an effective way to engage teams.

## LESSON 4

### BUILD LINKS BETWEEN 'LEARNING DESIGN' MOMENTS AND ANNUAL PROJECT CYCLES

To mitigate against the time-pressures at project year end and start, we focused our efforts to provide evidence to the client much earlier on in the year about what was working well, what we wanted to change and what new deliverables could be introduced. This process typically began in the lead up to our Annual Review and continued through to our annual reporting, thereby helping us to make the case for what should be prioritised in the following cycle.

## LESSON 5

### CONVENE MORE NETWORK-WIDE STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS AROUND CRITICAL ISSUES IN VIRTUAL SPACES

The Prosperity Fund recognised the value of face-to-face interaction. The nature of such network-wide events meant that they could only be held occasionally. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has seen widespread reliance on online interaction, this clearly has its pros and cons. Moving forward, we see significant potential in supplementing and complementing real time gatherings with network-wide virtual events. Not only are they helpful in reducing the pressure on annual face-to-face conferences, they also can play an important function in making people aware of different responses to common challenges and helping individuals to see how they, and the programmes they work on, fit in the bigger picture.

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