

ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC FOR MARKET FACILITATION

ASSESSING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

microREPORT #176

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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OVERVIEW

Markets are complex, dynamic and difficult to predict with certainty. Creating sustainable changes in markets requires that businesses and market actors feel a sense of commitment and ownership over their new activities and behaviors. It requires that donor-led interventions respond to existing and future market demands, while stimulating this sense of ownership. The market facilitation approach attempts to respond to these two needs. To effectively undertake a market facilitation approach, organizations must understand the fundamentals of business and markets, the underlying issues that are limiting market growth, and the sequence of changes that may be required. They must be learning organizations, aware of and adaptive to the changing market trends and opportunities that will emerge over time. Within this operating culture and environment, facilitators can then design interventions that strategically target key industry constraints. This sounds simple in theory; however, implementing this type of approach in practice is quite difficult.

Many development organizations adopt effective service delivery approaches that follow a linear set of repeatable and predictable interventions, generally focused on primary producers and on activities conducted by project staff (i.e. farmer training, input provision, market actor forums and workshops). These interventions are important, but will be insufficient for effective market facilitation, which requires staff to understand and respond to changing market dynamics in ways that minimize market distortion and stimulate sustainable increases in economic growth. Furthermore, facilitation requires that interventions are designed and staff are incentivized to respond to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of markets, and change through ongoing learning and iteration.

For an organization to be effective at market facilitation, it may therefore need to develop new knowledge, capacities and skills that are currently lacking. This tool aims to help practitioners and managers assess current capacity, understand what might be required, and begin a process of personal and organizational capacity improvement.

A. PURPOSE

This tool has two primary purposes:

- 1. To serve as a starting point for organizations to evaluate their current project implementation approach with respect to different components needed for effective market facilitation.
- 2. To offer a platform for conversation about what changes might be required within an organization to take on a market facilitation approach.

B. WHAT THE TOOL IS

The tool attempts to break down market facilitation into day-to-day practices to help clarify what effective organizational practice looks like. It is intended to assist managers interested in improving their organization's internal capacity to identify strengths and weaknesses and understand where to begin focusing their capacity building efforts.

The tool does this by aggregating behaviors and practices observed from working with over 50 development organizations in Africa and over 15 organizations specifically focused on improving smallholder linkages with markets. These range from cutting-edge, innovative organizations and projects designed specifically for market facilitation to established international aid organizations and projects that have a long history of service delivery-based agriculture interventions. While the tool aggregates experiences and trends across these organizations, it is necessarily a simplification of the issues involved since each capacity is a separate, complex topic. This tool draws from and targets agricultural interventions, however it reflects best practices of learning organizations that are relevant for all

market-driven projects to consider. A series of recommendations based on these best practices are provided at the end of this resource.

C. WHAT THE TOOL IS NOT

This tool is not a perfect picture or description of each organizational capacity; rather it highlights important issues that have been observed that affect organizations undertaking a market facilitation approach in order to stimulate reflection and discussion.

This tool is also not prescribing market facilitation as the "right" approach for every situation or intervention. However, if a project or organization is interested in taking a market facilitation approach, this tool describes knowledge and capacities required to successfully implement such an approach given ideal circumstances.

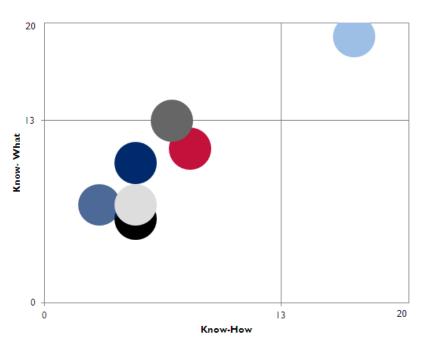
This tool alone will not be sufficient for upgrading organizational capacity for market facilitation. Managers interested in improving their organization's capacity should use this tool as an initial assessment to start a conversation about areas for growth. Real improvements will require leadership, management commitment and ongoing investment in the organization and staff to realize improved performance, learning and capacity as market facilitators.

D. USING THE ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC

There are three parts to this tool:

- **Part 1: Know WHAT:** Assessing understanding of the purpose and context of market facilitation.
- Part 2: Know HOW: Assessing organizational capacity to put market facilitation into practice.
- Part 3: Assessing Organizational Capacity: Analyzing how an organization is doing and where it can improve. Visual and electronic tools are provided to capture and represent organizational capacity, strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Figure I: Representative Assessment of Various Organizations' Capacities for Market Facilitation



Using this Guide:

1. Review the Know What capacities

and behaviors. There are five questions that target essential components of knowledge and understanding. Based on your organization's actions and attitude, rank the organization from 1-4 for each question. Challenge yourself to think of examples as you go through this matrix. Remember, the value of this exercise comes from rating actual rather than desired action.

- 2. Repeat this process and thought exercise for the **Know How** skills and characteristics. This section unpacks the components of organizational practices that have proven to be critical for market facilitation.
- 3. Add up the score out of 20 for Know What and the score out of 20 for Know How.

- 4. Plot it on the matrix provided, putting a score of 5-20 on the vertical and horizontal axes. How did your organization fare? Where are your organization's strengths? Where does it need to improve? Think about what is needed to get there.
- 5. At the end of this guide, there are a series of recommendations tailored to the state of your organization based on your own assessment of understanding and ability to implement a market facilitation approach. These recommendations are necessarily general, but will provide you with guidance on where to target your capacity building efforts.

As you go through this guide, remember to be honest about your assessment—no organization is perfect. Everyone can stand to improve their knowledge, skills and capabilities in different areas. An honest assessment of your organization's understanding of market facilitation will serve you better as you will be more aware of your organization's strengths and areas for improvement, and will be able to ask for support accordingly.

I. KNOW WHAT

This section aims to help you assess your organization's knowledge and understanding of market development and facilitation. Below are five broad categories with guiding questions to assist your reflection and assessment. The categorization attempts to capture both breadth and depth of understanding. The questions are:

- 1. What is the problem you are trying to solve?
- 2. What are the desired outcomes being targeted?
- 3. What are the constraints inhibiting these outcomes?
- 4. What is the project intervention strategy?
- 5. What is the role of the facilitating organization?

The following matrix outlines some common behaviors among implementing organizations. Read through each section below and rate your organization's current behaviors from 1-4. Remember, be honest and base this assessment on what your organization *does* and how it *acts*, not on what you want it to do or how you want it to act.

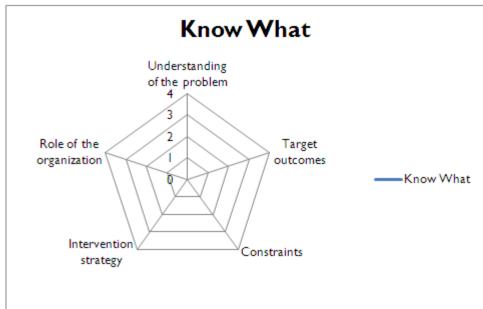


Figure 2: Know What Assessment Matrix

KNOW Conventional Basic Good understanding of value Sophisticated understanding of value chains and market facilitation approach WHAT agriculture project understanding of chains and market facilitation value chains and approach market facilitation approach 2 3 L 4 Rating: What is the • People do not have Producers have • The problem is not just with • The actors in the overall market system, including problem you are enough food and/or producers, but also the producers, businesses, supporting service providers, limited access to trying to solve? are living in inputs and output businesses and market actors and governing institutions are not cooperating poverty. The markets. This is who are working or could work effectively. problem is limiting their ability with producers. • There are limited commercial relationships between primarily one of to benefit from their • Businesses are not interested or farmers and firms, different firms and the service work and access production do not know how to work with providers that support them. quantity, quality and different producers, and producers are • The current behaviors of producers and firms tend to consistency. opportunities. not able to engage with them be adversarial and opportunistic; they are not oriented effectively. towards mutually beneficial commercial relationships. What are the • Producers are food • Well-functioning markets that Improved • Producers and firms are benefiting from improved access to knowledge, products and services available through desired secure and have production has led involve smallholder farmers. outcomes being increased incomes. to improved access • Firms are able to have strong multiple delivery channels and innovations that allow targeted? Production has to stronger output them to manage their businesses. relationships with smallholder increased in market farmers and are willing to invest • Behavior change at farmer and firm level—moving from opportunities and in the relationships. one-off transactions to strong commercial relationships quantity and agricultural inputs. improved in quality. • Producers and firms are able to that allow innovation in a competitive market. • Producers are manage their relationships for Ongoing improvements driven by firms and producers achieving increased mutual gain. who are innovating and learning to remain competitive. profits from these • Producers have access to the High-quality commercial relationships between producers opportunities. knowledge, products and and firms, between firms themselves and with service services they want through a providers and government institutions. variety of commercial channels. What are the • The challenge is • Producers are not · Limited market linkages between See constraints throughout market through a systems constraints primarily with the well linked into producers and firms and lens: inhibiting these producer. The markets and between firms themselves. • Some are market related: Support services are outcomes? poorest of the producer insufficient; enabling environment is not supportive of a High transaction costs are poor are unable to limiting firms' interest or ability competitive, dynamic and transparent market system; organization is participate in the inadequate. to work with smallholders. incentives for doing business are not aligned; business models not effective to overcome transaction costs. informal or formal Main constraints are Producers have low capacity and market sector. cash and guality of • Some are based on social norms and behaviors: People are knowledge about how to engage produce. skeptical about doing business outside of existing with firms and markets. • There are no market relationships or communication channels; comfort with • Incentives are not aligned to familiar market-oriented arrangements; perception that opportunities and/or ensure mutually beneficial

Table 1: Understanding the "What" in Market Facilitation

| | | firms are not interested in working with producers due to high transaction costs. | collaboration between market actors.Behaviors currently not oriented towards the market. | producers are poor and are not viable customers or suppliers. Some are capacity issues: Significant firm-level behavior change and capacity development is required; farmer knowledge of how to engage with market opportunities is still low; ability to seek and use innovation is low due to social norms and capacity constraints (e.g., literacy). |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| What is the project intervention strategy? | Standardized interventions focused primarily at producer-level constraints. Producer and farmer training to increase production. Provision of full or partial subsidies. Focused on activities with scale- up through replication of these activities with similar producers or businesses. Project design limits flexibility of interventions. Limited focus on learning systems or innovation to understand broader industry constraints. | Standardized interventions with a broader scope, incorporating needs of immediate market relationships. Establish obvious and immediate market relationships (farmer to aggregator, buyer or processor/input trader). Provision of full or partial financial subsidies. Scale-up is replication of activities. Learning is limited to immediate activities and impact the project has on producers. | Interventions adjusted based on understanding of the dynamic nature of implementation strategies. Attempts to address constraints throughout all levels of the value chain. Uses a 'facilitator' or 'enabler' approach to interventions. Uses financial subsidies strategically and with consideration for firm's capacity to absorb and manage this capital investment. Recognizes sequenced nature of interventions. Starting to probe for reasons behind constraints and behavior changes but struggling to adjust interventions based on this information and learning. Scale-up is based on behavior changes triggered and driven by market dynamics. | Project design provides flexible intervention strategy based on learning from all staff and from recognizing emerging trends in the market. Always probes for reasons behind surface constraints and behavior changes; able to adjust interventions based on information and learning. Uses a range of intervention tools (e.g., training, graduated cost sharing, self-selecting mechanisms, competition to drive innovation) strategically to tailor support for industry growth. Tackles constraints at multiple levels within value chain/ industry. Sequenced interventions using a 'light touch' approach of adjusting intensity based on emerging needs and situations.¹ Focused on outcomes and hypothesis driven. Scale-up is based on learning through innovation and behavior changes triggered through interventions. Scale-up is driven by market dynamics. |

¹ A light touch approach recognizes and responds to market-driven opportunities without getting directly involved in the industry. As staff learn about what is and is not working, the project can adjust the intensity and direction of resources to target specific opportunities and leverage points to catalyze change.

| What is the role of the facilitating organization? | Service delivery— training, support to government counterparts/ extension, provision of inputs/start-up costs, etc. Primary relationship is with producers, some relationships with other firms and service providers. Scale-up of ideas or activities. | Linking farmer with firms that are immediately accessible and obviously related (e.g., farmers and aggregators). Reactively addressing market constraints with some firms. Scale-up of ideas or activities taking into account a business perspective. | Market facilitators are relationship builders. Identifying constraints preventing firms at all levels from entering the industry or growing sustainably. Targeting the removal of those constraints with reasonable levels of risk management. Intentionally stimulating business- minded behavior through activities, discussions, connections, joint demonstrations/pilots, etc. Limited follow-up on these conversations to support the business with implementation or to learn from successes and failures of the idea. | Market facilitators are required to take on many different roles, including: coach, relationship builder, business person, communicator and innovator.² Assisting firms to understand and manage risk and benefits. Absorbing and buying-down risk as required through targeted demonstration of an idea or opportunity. Role is always shifting based on constraints in the system and needs of producers or firms. Staff and organization positioning itself as a neutral player—a change agent rather than a market actor or competitor. |
|--|---|--|---|--|
|--|---|--|---|--|

² Refer to Being a Market Facilitator: A Guide to Staff Roles and Capacities, USAID microREPORT #172 for further information on this.

II. KNOW HOW

Understanding *what* market facilitation involves, the purpose of an intervention and the problem that is being addressed, is only half of the equation. Understanding *how* to apply these concepts at different levels of the

organization is also required. The following matrix outlines five important elements of organizational capacity that answer the following questions:

> 1. *How* do field staff view and carry out their role? Field staff are the front-lines of the project. Field staff capacity (their knowledge, skills and judgment) and their understanding and ability to act as market facilitators

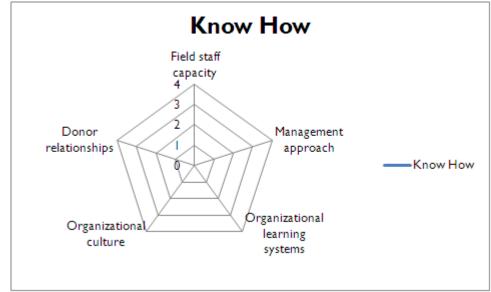


Figure 3: Know How Assessment Matrix

will be essential in creating success.

- 2. How does management manage? The management approach is key to a successful market facilitation strategy.
- 3. *How does the organization learn and use this learning?* The dynamic nature of markets requires organizations to learn about what is happening within firms and the industry and adjust their interventions accordingly. This requires effective systems of capturing, analyzing and using information and knowledge.
- 4. *How does the organization operate?* The culture of an organization establishes the norms of staff behavior and practices. This has a strong influence on how the overall organization functions.
- 5. *How does the project or organization manage its donor?* The donor is the client; they pay for the project. The degree of donor comfort and satisfaction with the work being carried out has a strong influence on how practitioners are able to respond to opportunities, learn and adjust interventions accordingly. Improving donor relationships can improve the operating conditions for a project and ultimately the performance and progress of the project, staff and industry.

Table 2: Understanding the "How" in Market Facilitation

| Know How | Conventional agriculture capacities | Basic capacity for market facilitation | Good capacity for market facilitation | Excellent capacity for market facilitation |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Rating | I | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| How do field staff view and carry out their role? Field staff capacity ³ | High degree of agronomy or community development knowledge. Activities focused. Generally score 1's on Being a Market Facilitator guide. | Understand general concepts of market facilitation, but are not sure what it looks like in practice. Limited business knowledge and skills. Largely focused on farmer-level constraints and firms immediately around the farmer; lack clear vision of the big picture. Risk averse; hesitant to try new ideas. Activities focused. Scores a range of 1's and 2's on Being a Market Facilitator guide. | Good business skills. Focused on farmer- and firm-level constraints; aware of the broader industry environment, but unsure how to engage with these players. Able to create direct market linkages. Interested in learning and testing new approaches. Starting to communicate successes and challenges to colleagues and partners. Scores mostly 2's on Being a Market Facilitator guide. | Strong business skills. Focused on outcomes (not activities); solution seeking and proactive. Creative problem solvers, able to tailor interventions to suit the needs of the firm and industry. Collaborative with teammates. Couples analytical thinking with targeted, strategic action. High capacity on <i>Being a Market Facilitator</i> guide (mostly 3's): strong communicator, business person, relationship builder, coach and innovator on staff. |
| How does management manage? Management approach | Centralized decision making. Uses only linear planning systems to ensure that work gets done on time (e.g., log frames and work plans). Surprised by changing trends. Reacts to new situations rather than being adaptive and pro-active. Focuses on completing activities. Focuses on efficiency—burn rates, number of | Realizes the need to reconsider management approach for value chain/market-oriented projects, but not sure how to do it. Sees importance of investing in staff development as market facilitation requires new behaviors and skills. Vision is established, but unsure how to communicate it clearly to field staff in a way that stimulates action. Not sure how to manage in an ambiguous and complex environment. Staff performance is based and evaluated on their ability to collect data, implement activities and work as a team. | Able to stimulate and direct innovative field-based ideas while providing clear vision for team. Recognizes the importance of management's role in creating a vision, setting clear performance metrics and enabling a culture of open communication. Staff performance is based and evaluated on their ability to communicate and stimulate industry changes. Beginning to coach staff and invest in field staff development. Manages for outcomes (behavior change) not activities. Starting to promote experimentation, creating 'safe' environments for staff to test out | Uses various management tools and approaches to keep staff aligned on project vision in an ambiguous operating environment. Uses M&E as a critical management tool to achieve outcomes. Invests in development of staff, values field-level knowledge. Learns and adjusts interventions quickly based on learning. Accepts that failures are part of the innovation and learning process. Promotes a culture of feedback and ongoing learning and innovation. Staff performance is based and evaluated on their ability to observe, analyze, communicate and stimulate industry changes. Able to manage a cultural change process |

³Refer to Being a Market Facilitator: A Guide to Staff Roles and Capacities for further information on this.

| | producers reached, crop yields, etc. Staff performance is based and evaluated on their ability to complete activities and generate and collect data. | | new ideas or skills. Introducing incentives to promote positive & desired staff behaviors; careful in using controlling or directed approaches. Focuses on effectiveness of interventions. | within an organization or team as it moves towards being more innovative. Sees the organization as a system, and understands the implications of management activities; highly self-aware. |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| How does the organization learn and use this learning? Organizational learning | Responds to donor reporting requirements through M&E metrics and reports. Conducts periodic impact assessments. Learning integrated into program improvements at pre-defined, dispersed intervals (e.g., program design, mid-term evaluation); long turn-around times between information collection and response. | Sees the need to get real-time information to make better decisions, but doesn't know how to manage this in the face of reporting requirements. Monitoring activities driven by donor requirements rather than implementation needs. Starting to invest in new ways of learning and communicating between staff (e.g., workshops, trainings). | Learning and internal M&E are used as management tools. Starting to provide feedback to and from the field staff. Starting to have a culture of learning, but not yet well-linked to action (perhaps limited by resources, management approach, culture, low comfort with failure). Learning focus is driven by management, not owned throughout the organization. Focused on explicit knowledge capture, not yet investing in ways to share unspoken/tacit knowledge. | Learning is critical for effective facilitation and industry growth. It is used as a management tool at all levels for ongoing improvements; ownership from all levels of staff. Staff participates actively in learning and industry diagnosis, which informs management decisions ensuring ongoing adjustment of interventions. Monitoring behavior changes (through proxy indicators) of actors throughout the value chain. High capacity of all staff to manage and use learning tools and systems and act on their knowledge. Tools and systems are constantly upgraded; tools are used to trigger reflection. Culture of learning; strong feedback loops up and downwards to capture explicit and tacit knowledge. |
| How does the organization operate? Organizational culture | Risk averse, limited learning from challenges, failure is avoided and never published. Many organizational layers; hierarchy of decision making. Little to no feedback between organizational levels. | Feedback loops are slow and punctuated by downward communication. Willing to try something new, but only with extensive evidence of effectiveness; risk averse. Slow to incorporate learning into programmatic and strategic interventions. | Open culture of feedback between management and staff and among staff themselves. Invests in learning by testing different tools or systems to improve communication. | Innovative and flexible. Values learning and takes action to incorporate lessons and trends into strategies and interventions quickly. Strong open communication feedback loops. Clarity of purpose and direction. |

| How does the | Follows donor | • Understands the need to manage | Open conversation with donor | • Strong relationship with donors; able to |
|---------------|--|---|---|---|
| project or | requirements. | the client (donor), but still unsure | about what is working and what | mutually learn from challenges and |
| organization | Limited discussion | how to do so effectively. | is not on the project, and what is | implementation to improve quickly. |
| manage its | on what is required | Unsure how to address | required to accelerate success. | Project has the space to innovate and |
| donor? | to make the | unproductive pressures that | Working to find a balance | learn to achieve performance and |
| | program successful | seemingly contradict interest and | between reporting and | outcomes. |
| Donor | or of successes and | incentives for learning (e.g., | accountability to donor and | • Donor has sufficient understanding of the |
| relationships | failures. | appropriately messaging the | creating space for the project and | project activities, goals and objectives; |
| | | balance of M&E requirements | staff to innovate and learn. | feels comfortable with communication |
| | | with learning needs of all staff). | | (concerning both successes and failures). |

III. ASSESSING YOUR RESULTS

By now you should have a better sense of where your organization stands and where there is room for improvement. For a visual representation of this, use the following tables and tools.

STEP I

Mark your score in the following charts, or use the related excel tool.⁴

| Know What: Knowledge about Approach | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| | | |
| Component | Score (I-4) | |
| Understanding of the problem | | |
| Target outcomes | | |
| Constraints | | |
| Intervention strategy | | |
| Role of the organization | | |
| Total | /20 | |

| Know How: Organizational Capacity | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Component | Score (1-4) | |
| Field staff capacity | | |
| Management approach | | |
| Organizational learning systems | | |
| Organizational culture | | |
| Donor relationships | | |
| Total | /20 | |

STEP 2

Plot the aggregate score on the appropriate axis below or use the excel tool provided.



⁴This can be accessed at <u>http://microlinks.kdid.org/library</u>.

STEP 3

Assess your results:

- Where does your organization stand? What surprised you?
- What are strengths you could build on?
- What might it take for your organization to move up another level?
- What is one area in which you would like to improve practices?
- Who might you need to work with to do so? What additional investments might be required?

Depending on where your organization stands, there are different options for improvement. Compare where you plotted your organization in Step 2 with the organizational diagnostic in Figure 4, below. It will not necessarily be easy to make changes, but table 3 offers analysis and initial steps your organization can consider to increase its capacity to implement a market facilitation approach.

Figure 4: Improving Organizational Effectiveness for Market Facilitation

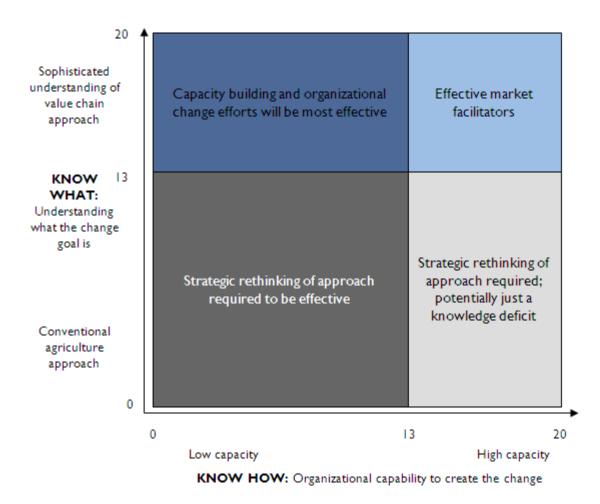


Table 3: Understanding Your Organizational Diagnostic

| Know What | Know How | Organizational Diagnostic Explained |
|-----------|----------|--|
| 0-13 | 0-13 | If your organization is in this quadrant, your organization might need to rethink its strategy for market facilitation. The organization might be thinking and talking about market facilitation and a value chain approach, but its actions have yet to catch up with its ideas. Be honest about what your organization does, what it wants to do (and why) and what type of organization it wants/needs to become. Taking the time to facilitate this conversation with others in the organization now will pay off in the future as your team is able to put ideas into practice. Keep in mind market facilitation is not the only approach to a situation and may not be appropriate for all organizations. |
| 13-20 | 0-13 | Your organization understands what is required for market facilitation and the organizational requirements to support it, but is still not sure how to put that knowledge into practice or may not have the necessary market facilitation skills on the team. To build these skills and translate theory to practice, the organization will have to increase that capacity through learning exchanges, practical trainings, mentoring and coaching, etc. Try sending staff on a few exchange visits to other organizations that do this type of work. Have them come back and share what they learned with your team and challenge (and support) them to put it into practice. Some tough decisions about who to keep, or not keep, on staff may have to be made based on their performance and ability to stimulate relationships and incentivize industry growth. New staff may have to be hired who already have the required skills. |
| 0-13 | 13-20 | In this situation, your organization has many of the necessary staff knowledge, skills and attitudes—with organizational structure and management to support it—as well as good relationships with your donor. You might be lacking a strong and experiential understanding of the problem (sustainable competitive and innovative market growth) and what needs to change to enable it. This is likely a knowledge deficit that is appearing as staff concerns and strategic mistakes. Hire some experts onto the team, send staff on exchanges and workshops to see how other organizations operate and understand market facilitation, and encourage deeper thought with genuine curiosity and "why" questions. |
| 13-20 | 13-20 | Your organization understands market facilitation in depth and is operating so as to enable all staff to participate in high-performing roles. New ideas and best practices are always emerging, so keep learning both from the business environment and other organizations to continue innovating and improving. Look at the areas that you were strongest and those where you were weakest to determine where your organization need to focus improvements first. |