

# Reimagining Peace Corps Language Programming and Training

Language Training specialists  
Overseas programming and training support

23 June, 2023



**Peace  
Corps**





# Presentation Overview

1. Overview of the agency and our competency-based service model for Peace Corps Volunteers
2. The role of language and intercultural communication performance indicators within the Volunteer competencies
3. Discussion





# A Brief Overview of the Peace Corps





# The Volunteer Competency Model





# The three purposes of the VCM

## ❶ Training design



Staff design and facilitate learning experiences to prepare trainees/Volunteers to perform the competencies.

## ❷ Learning assessment



Staff design and conduct assessments to measure trainee/Volunteer learning and performance of the competencies, and to provide feedback to trainees/Volunteers.

## ❸ Performance development

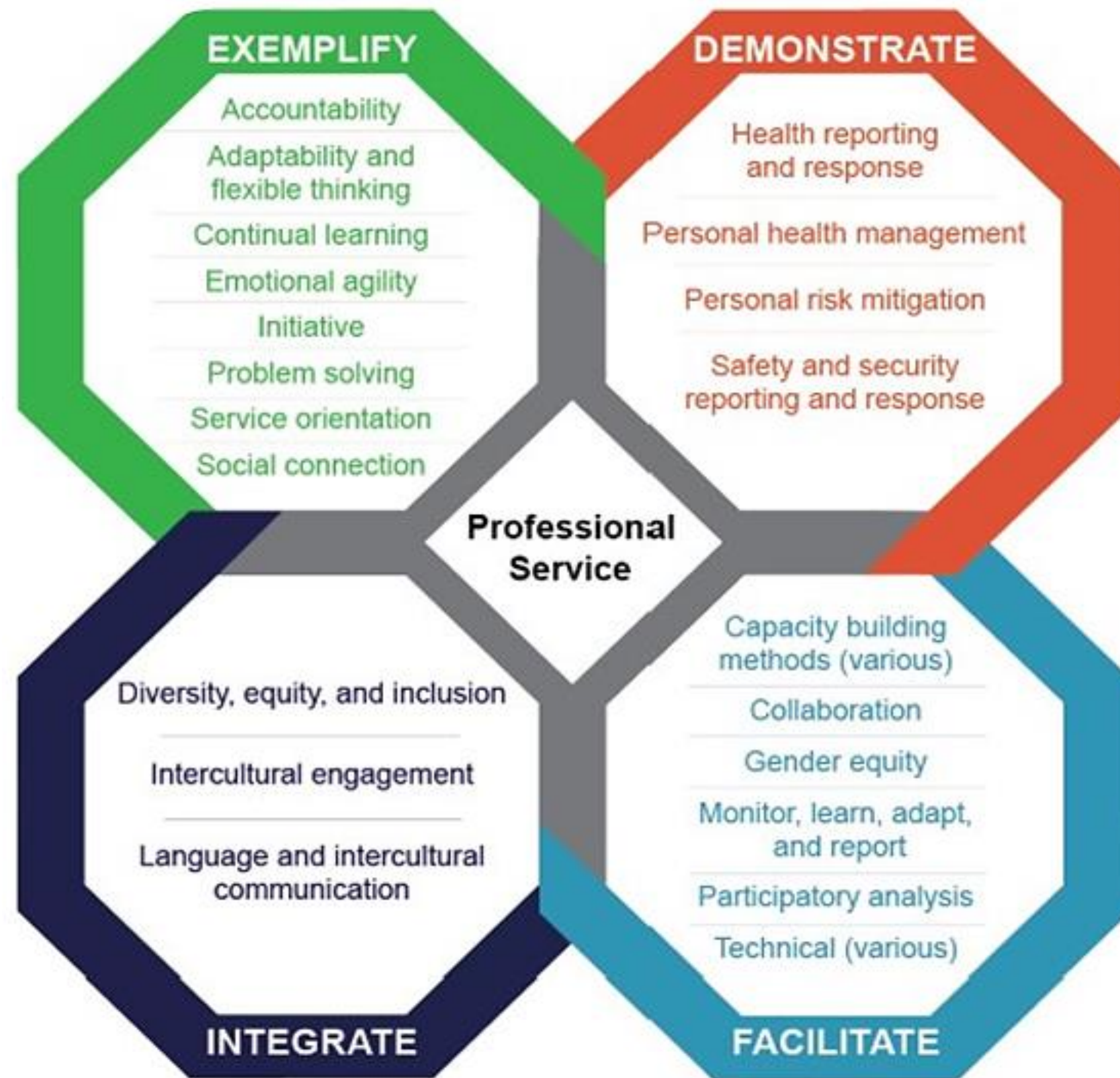


Staff and trainees/Volunteers use competencies to reflect on and monitor performance and to support ongoing development.

# Volunteer Job Functions



# Volunteer Job Competencies





# List of competencies

A

- Accountability
- Adaptability and flexible thinking
- Adult support of youth health
- Advocacy planning
- Agroforestry production
- Assessment

B

- Basic business skills
- Basic farm management

C

- Camps
- Childhood literacy teaching skills
- Clubs
- (Co-) facilitate
- Collaboration
- Community savings groups
- Continual learning
- (Co-) teach
- (Co-) train
- Crop cultivation
- Curriculum, lesson planning, and materials design

D

- Designing for behavior change
- Dietary diversity
- Digital literacy
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion

E

- Emotional agility
- Employability
- English teaching skills
- Entrepreneurship behaviors
- Environmental education

F

- Field-based instruction
- Fuel-efficient cookstoves

G

- Gender equity
- General teaching skills
- Guided learning

H

- Health education delivery
- Health reporting and response
- Health services for PLHIV
- Healthy childcare practices
- Healthy pregnancy and newborn practices
- HIV prevention

I

- Inclusive teaching
- Initiative
- Intercultural engagement

L

- Language and intercultural communication
- Life skills

M

- Mentor

O

- Monitor, learn, adapt, and report
- Organizational collaboration
- Organizational management
- Organizational performance
- OVC health and well-being

P

- Participatory analysis
- Personal health management
- Personal money management
- Personal risk mitigation
- PLHIV health and well-being
- Positive parenting
- Positive youth development
- Post-harvest management
- Problem solving
- Project design and management
- Project/event (co-) planning

S

- Safety and security reporting and response
- Service learning
- Service orientation
- Small animal husbandry
- Social behavior change communication
- Social connection
- Soil and water conservation
- Solid waste management
- STEM teaching skills
- Stigma reduction

T

- Supply chain management
- Teacher communities of practice
- Tree planting and care

V

- Volunteerism

Y

- Youth-friendly services
- Youth health

**Job Functions**

- Demonstrate responsibility for personal health, safety, and security
- Exemplify commitment to service and resilience
- Facilitate participatory development
- Integrate into communities

**Competencies by Sector**

Agriculture

Community Economic Development:  
Comm. org. dev. | Econ. dev.

Education:  
Literacy | Math & science | TEFL

Environment

Health:  
HIV/AIDS | MNCH | YH&W

Youth in Development





The role of language  
and intercultural  
communication within  
the Volunteer  
competencies



# And yet, a “language gap” calls for more intentional technical language programming and training

“Volunteers report a high rate of stress, most of the stress is related to their inabilities to speak the language and integrate into the community. As more CD PCVs are being assigned to smaller communities, more attention should be given to technical language training.”  
(Ukraine, Comm Econ Dev)

“Language is barrier in terms of counterpart integration; PCVs report they have difficulty in listening and understanding what people are saying. There is a need to increase technical activities during PST that integrate language learning.”  
(Samoa, English ED)

“PCVs develop a conversational level of Tetum during PST. To be able to work more effectively in the communities some have to work with the tutor, and Post has provided local dialect and Tetum language training at IST. The majority have the necessary language skills, but in the future, we need to strengthen technical language in the area of CED.”  
(Timor-Leste, Comm Econ Dev)

“More technical Language skills are needed for certain conversations especially when dealing with cultural or ingrained beliefs, behavior change does not come easily and requires continuous efforts and persistence.”  
(The Gambia, Health Ed)

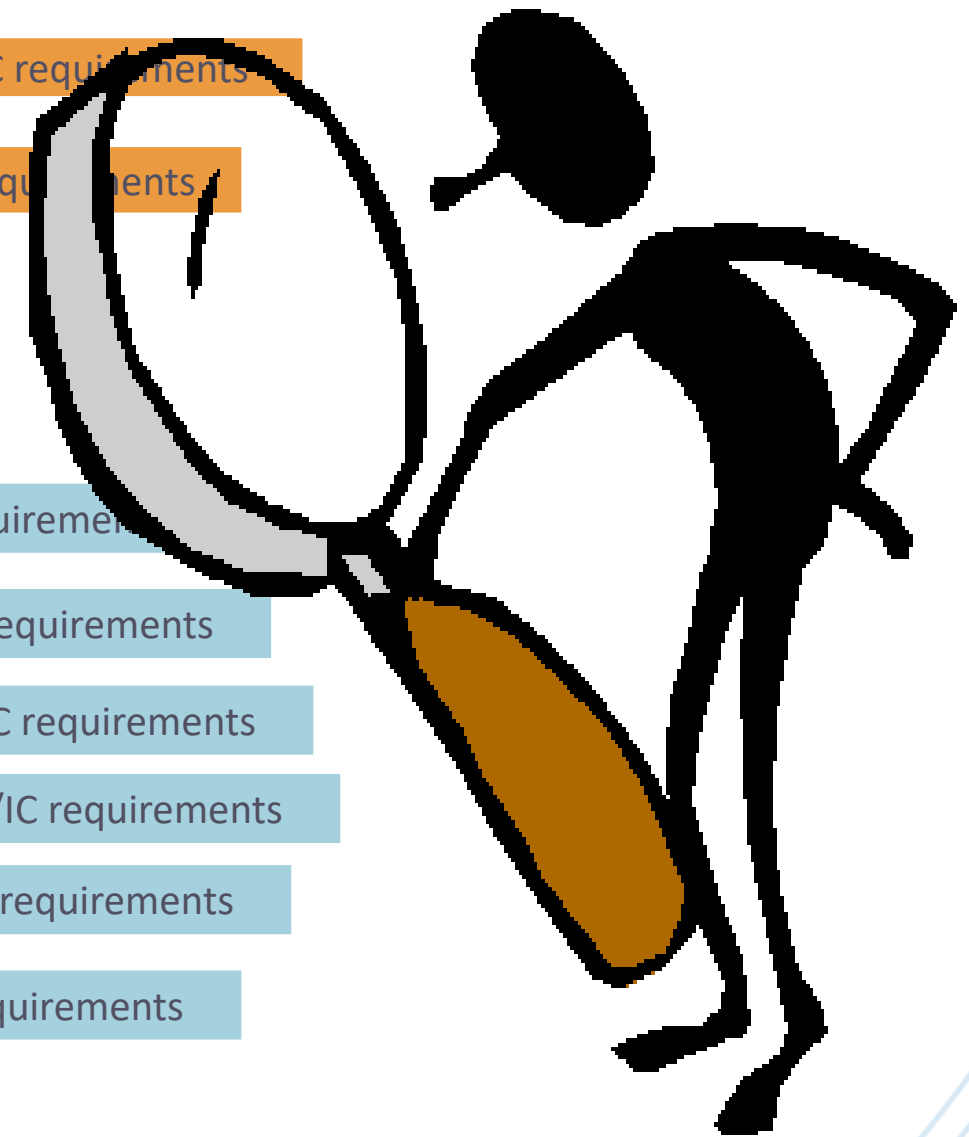
“67% of AG Volunteers think that language barriers have prevented from effectively achieving Peace Corps’ Goals. During the first 6 to 8 months, a good proportion of Volunteers does not have the needed language skills to develop communication members’ capacities. There is a need for language training that complements technical training.”  
(Senegal, AG)





# Volunteer Competencies

The PC Language Specialist Team analyzed the KSAs for *every* Volunteer competency to determine inherent local language and intercultural communication needs.



Language / IC appears here





# Volunteer Job Competencies: Facilitate Participatory Development





# METHOD COMPETENCY: (Co-) facilitate

**Competency standard:** [Co-] guide participants through a structured, participatory process, series of activities, or methodology to achieve their goals

## Competency indicators:

- Analyze how aspects of gender, identity, and culture may affect the activity, the participants, and the relationship between the facilitator(s) and the participants
- Develop a plan for facilitation, including agenda and goals
- Create and maintain a safe, productive environment, where diverse perspectives are respected
- Implement the facilitation plan, and modify as necessary
- Monitor and encourage participant engagement
- Summarize key points, and clarify follow-up action(s)

## Competency KSAs:

- Know the PACA lenses and how each lens applies to the facilitator and context (K)
- ✓ Identify the purpose and analyze the characteristics of the context and target participants (S)
- Know what facilitation is and when it is appropriate to use (K)
- Identify goal(s) for the process, activity, or methodology (K/S)
- ✓ Identify the venue, participants, and meeting day/time to facilitate the process, activity, or methodology; seek venues and timing that promote participation of women and girls and vulnerable and/or historically marginalized individuals (S)
- Estimate required materials, sequence, and associated timing of actions to facilitate the process, activity, or methodology (S)
- ✓ Establish and maintain facilitator presence, including active listening, paraphrasing, reading the room, validating and responding to participants' contributions and emotions, holding space, and management of body, voice, and movement (K/S)
- Value a participatory and inclusive process (A)
- Know typical characteristics of group dynamics and cultural and contextual influences (K)
- Know how aspects of identity, power, and context—including gender norms, expectations, and assumptions—may affect the participants, the activity and/or facilitation, and the relationship between the facilitator and participants (K)
- Analyze group dynamics and progress toward the goal (S)
- ✓ Identify and show respect for priorities, feelings, assets, and experiences of others (K/S/A)
- Know and value the experiential learning cycle (K/A)
- ✓ Listen for and identify key points and action steps (K/S)
- ✓ Know and use facilitation techniques that are appropriate to participants' needs and abilities (K/S)
- ✓ Know how to and be willing to make adjustments during facilitation as appropriate to respond to participants' needs, time, and available resources (K/S)
- ✓ Select language, images, and participatory activities that are effective, appropriate, and inclusive of the identities of participants, especially women, girls, vulnerable, and/or historically marginalized individuals (e.g., avoid stereotypes that exclude or favor particular individuals based on aspects of identity, where culturally and contextually feasible)
- Value creating opportunities, especially for women, girls, vulnerable, and/or historically marginalized individuals, to lead, practice, and apply new skills and behaviors, reflect, and share their perspectives, especially in contexts where they are not as encouraged or able to pursue their own life goals and to determine their own life trajectory in the specific community context (A)

Capacity building  
methods (various)

Collaboration

Gender equity

Monitor, learn,  
adapt, and report

Participatory analysis

Technical (various)

FACILITATE



# Language-dependent co-facilitating skills

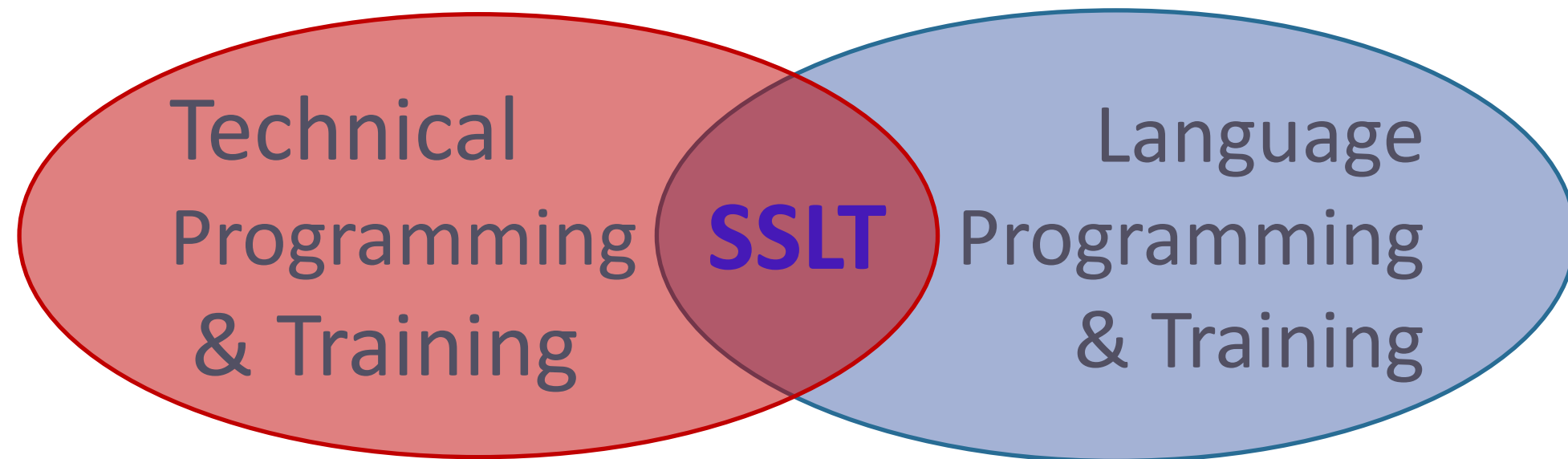


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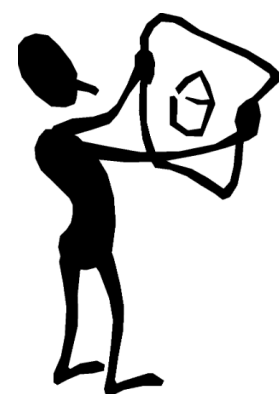
# Sector-Specific Language Training (SSLT)

- Peace Corps' adaptation of trends in content-based language instruction (CBI, CBLI, CLIL, CALP)
- Underlying Principle: when technical content is integrated with language learning objectives,
  - technical knowledge → building blocks for language development
  - language → vehicle through which technical knowledge is developed
- Requires a greater level of collaboration between post language staff (LCCs and LCFs) and program/sector staff in HE, ED, CED, ENV, AG, YD.





# Sector-Specific Language Training Design



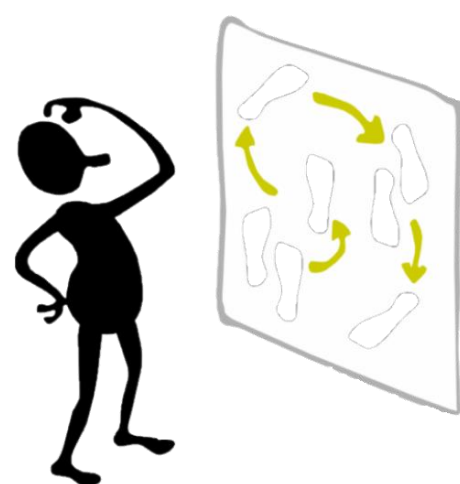
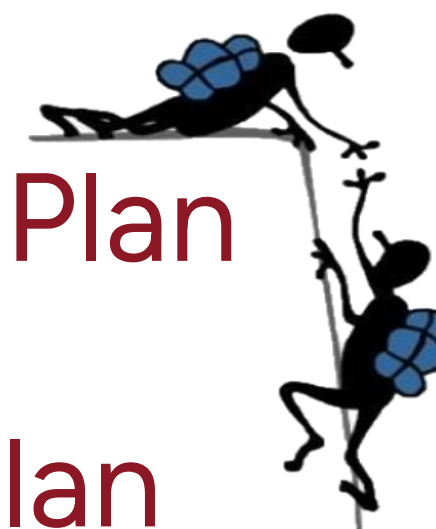
1. Conduct a curriculum audit

2. Conduct an SSLT Inventory



3. Create an SSLT Plan

4. Implement the SSLT Plan



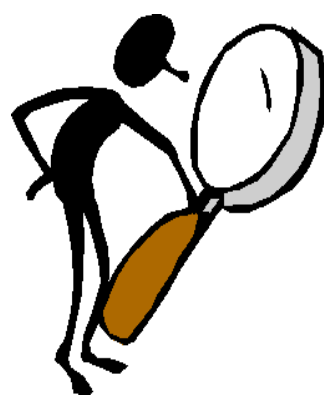
5. Monitor, evaluate, & refine the plan

5. Celebrate success!





## 2. Conduct an SSLT Inventory



## Experience of PC Benin

<https://youtu.be/BBtR7sVpSPk?t=8>



Project Activity: Co-train and/or Co-facilitate a series of Care Group meetings with Leader Mothers to promote essential child health practices			
Language Can-Do's	Intercultural Communication Can-Do's	Language Forms	Vocabulary
<p>I can participate in conversations with pregnant and lactating women to identify behaviors, challenges, and insights to be addressed during Care Group sessions.</p> <p>I can exchange information about changes that women participants experience when they take part in Care Groups.</p> <p>I can discuss with Care Group members the pros and cons of different pregnancy practices to enhance mother and child well-being.</p>	<p>I can share my interpretations of a pregnancy/lactating practices with pregnant/lactating women while respecting theirs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The general mentality regarding breastfeeding in rural areas is that by exclusively breastfeeding a baby, he ends up growing up with a tumor in his throat,</li> <li>In rural areas, breastfeeding women think that their babies should be supplemented with water and other foods before the first six months,</li> <li>Ignorance about the usefulness of colostrum in rural areas to the point where women dump it on the ground.</li> </ul> <p>I can interact appropriately at CHW's training sessions based on cultural norms and professional dynamics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beninese do not like foreigners to feel frustrated in their community. The volunteer should try not to express their negative emotions through body language while managing their reactions.</li> <li>Speaking the local language and using expressions of respect often make participants more focused on the subject.</li> <li>During sensitive discussions, it is necessary to separate the women from the men to prevent them from getting carried away in shyness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. LE QUESTIONNEMENT</b></p> <p><b>1,1 Inversion du sujet: Verbe+Sujet+ Complément+?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Avez-vous reçu une formation pour être relais communautaires?</li> </ul> <p><b>1,2 -Est-ce que+ Sujet + Verbe+ Complément +?</b></p> <p>Ex: Est-ce que nous pouvons parler de la planification d'activités?</p> <p><b>1,3- Question avec intonation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Le relai doit avoir d'excellentes techniques de facilitation?</li> </ul> <p><b>1,4 Questionnement avec les mots de questions (quand, où, comment, quel, qui, pourquoi, combien: conjonction/adverbe+inversion du sujet+?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Combien d'agents de santé communautaire y- a-il dans le village?</li> <li>Comment peut-on les rassembler?</li> <li>Quand est-ce que nous pouvons les rencontrer?</li> <li>Où est-ce que les agents de santé communautaires se réunissent?</li> <li>Quels sont les rôles et responsabilités d'un relai communautaire?</li> <li>Qui fait les sensibilisations?</li> <li>Pourquoi les agents de santé communautaire doivent ils améliorer leur performance?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. LES TEMPS VERBAUX</b></p> <p><b>2,1 Le présent de l'indicatif (Regular verbs ending: -er verbs: *-e, -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent*; -ir Verbs: *-is, -is, -it, -issons, -issez, -issent*)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Nous parlons de la planification d'activités avec les relais communautaires</li> <li>Ex: Les relais nous avertissent par rapport aux difficultés liées à leurs fonctions</li> </ul> <p><b>2,2 Le passé-Composé: S+Avoir/Etre(Présent) + Participe Passé</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Tous les relais communautaires ont appris les techniques de transmission de messages clés relatifs à la santé</li> </ul> <p><b>2,3 Le futur proche: S+Aller(Présent) +Verbe(Infinitif)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Nous allons discuter du changement de comportement avec vous.</li> </ul> <p><b>2,4 L'imparfait: Ending: ais-ais-ait-ions-iez-aient</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Les modes de vie des gens, leurs coutumes et traditions constituaient des obstacles au changement de comportement</li> </ul> <p><b>2,5 Le conditionnel présent (*ais-ais-ait-ions-iez-aient*)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Un relai devrait être un modèle dans la communauté</li> </ul> <p><b>3. L'UTILISATION DE L'EXPRESSION "A VOIR BESOIN_/NE PAS A VOIR BESOIN DE":</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ex: Dans le cadre des activités de conseils à domicile, le relai n'a pas besoin d'informer préalablement la famille avant de s'y rendre</li> </ul>	<p><b>1 Les noms et groupes nominaux:</b> la santé; la compétence; le renforcement des capacités d'un relai ,les forces et faiblesses;les pratiques de santé essentielles, la collaboration, une discussion sensible; les objectifs, le but, un entraînement, un atelier de travail ou de formation, une compétence, la planification de projet, la communication, le changement de comportement, les connaissances techniques, les attentes, les avantages,le calendrier,un programme,un rendez-vous,l'emploi du temps; le changement social, le changement de comportement , le progrès accompli,une aptitude;une attitude; les rôle et responsabilités; l'amélioration des performances; le renforcement des capacités, la mesure des capacités, un obstacle, le développement professionnel, le modèle d'enseignement une observation par les pairs</p> <p><b>2 Les verbes et groupes verbaux:</b> atteindre,attendre, développer les capacités,soutenir, aider, enseigner, lire, aimer, observer; préférer, discuter, rassembler; apprendre, pouvoir, impliquer, promouvoir, pérenniser devoir; espérer,animer; développer, clarifier, favoriser, se rendre à, s'introduire, Échanger les salutations d'usage, Se présenter, prioriser, développer; évaluer,c oncevoir ,mener à bien; mettre en oeuvre, faire face aux besoins</p> <p><b>3 Adjectifs:</b> modèle,disponible, attentif, courtois, respectueux, patient; essentiel;régulier, social,comportemental, clair, concis; sensible, accompli; professionnel; bienveillant, équilibré, efficace; durable, réfléchi , habile; mesurable, observable</p> <p><b>Adverbes/Prépositions:</b> bien; volontiers, debout, mieux, vite; ici; ailleurs, alentour, dedans, dehors, premièrement, deuxièmement; ensuite,à, de, par, pour, sans, déjà, bientôt, un peu près, environ, puis, c'est pourquoi; vraiment</p> <p><b>Expressions:</b> C'est une idée [géniale] [intéressante]. C'est un point important.</p>



### 3. Create an SSLT Plan

Experience of  
PC North Macedonia

<https://youtu.be/5IUVS8R4w24>





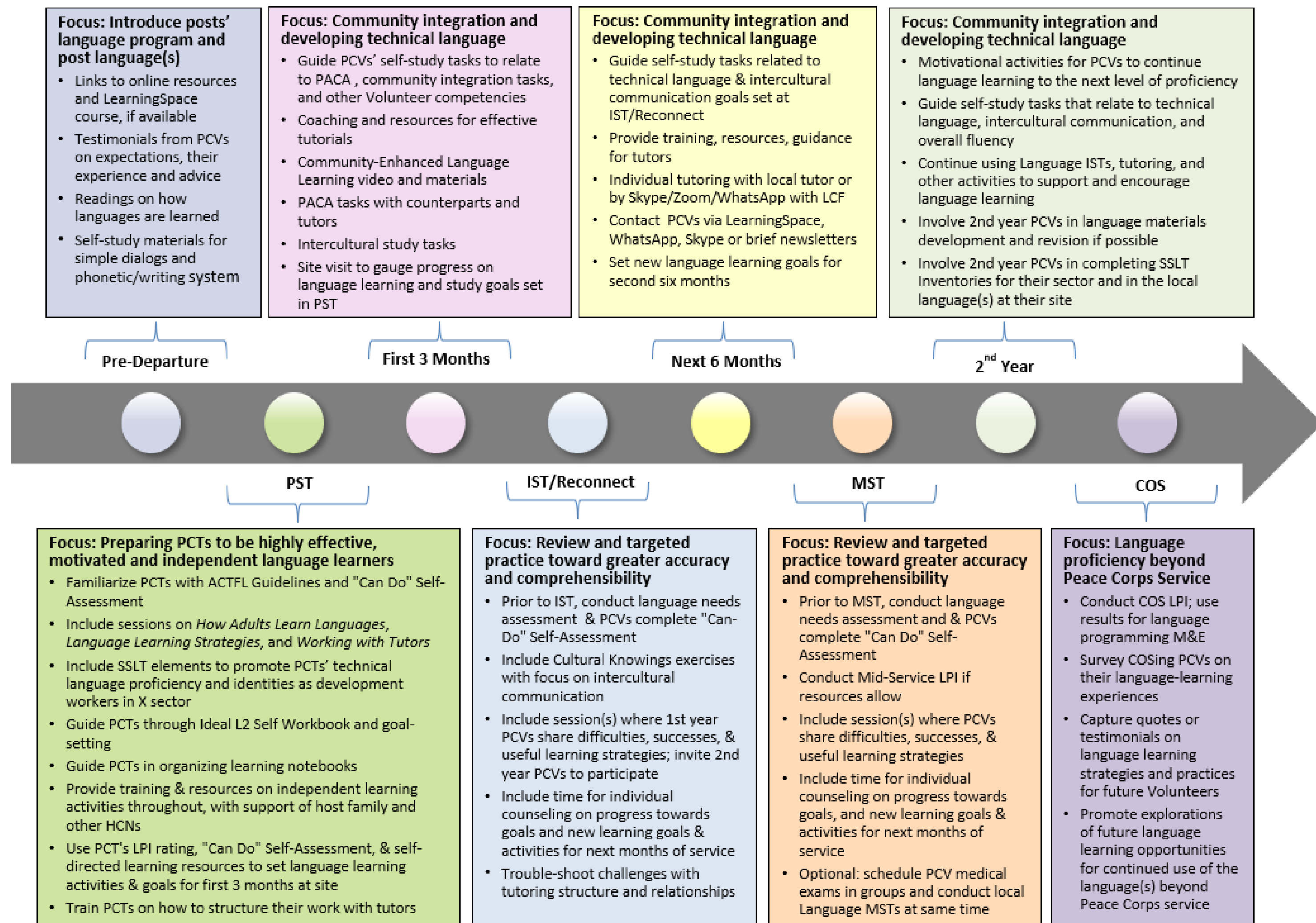
## 4. Implement the SSLT Plan



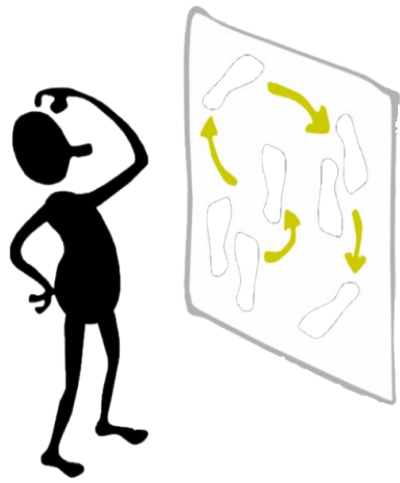
Experience of  
PC Ghana

[https://youtu.be/L8\\_S1UL6adA?t=89](https://youtu.be/L8_S1UL6adA?t=89)









## 4. Monitor, evaluate, & refine the plan

“We edited our language manuals and workbooks also to incorporate sector-specific language. SSLT really improved language learning among Trainees” ~PC Lesotho

“It was a positive experience, having different training teams collaborate with language staff.” ~PC Peru



# In summary...







# Questions?

Thank you!

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# NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements

A collaboration between NCSSFL and ACTFL



[https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/Resources-Publications/Advanced-Can-Do\\_Statements.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/Resources-Publications/Advanced-Can-Do_Statements.pdf)



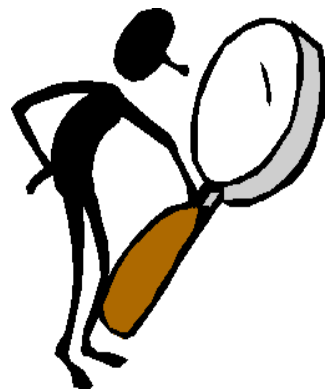


# The Peace Corps Act (1961)

*No persons shall be assigned to duty as volunteers in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment they possess such reasonable proficiency as their assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which they are assigned.*



# 1. Conduct an SSLT Inventory



## Experience of PC Benin Ines Latoundji, LCC

- Since being an LCC (over 10 years), this is the first time that her post has really worked on language curriculum in detail (capacity building), and she is very proud of the accomplishment.
- The work involved her LCFs, in consultation with the programming specialists, creating roleplays where they tried to put themselves in the shoes of the volunteer, so they could better understand the language they needed to complete a project task.
- For her, it was a really, really, really, really fantastic experience!



## 2. Create an SSLT Plan



### Experience of PC North Macedonia Evalina Alibegovska, TM

- The key was to make it simple in the beginning and to get buy-in from the entire training staff to include a language element in each of their sessions, technical, medical, safety & security, admin, and language.
- They started just with vocabulary but as the non-language staff became more skilled, they built out language into expressions and dialogs and tried to make it a seamless part of their sessions.

### 3. Implement the SSLT Plan



## Experience of PC Ghana Alex Kwapong, LCC

- One innovation that came from SSLT were supplemental readers which are essentially stories written in the target language about volunteers engaged in different activities that address the competencies. The readers start at intermediate low and progress to intermediate high, and address topics in all 3 of their sectors: ED, AG, Health.
- They also created Training Directed Activities that require trainees, during a 4-day site visit, to discover for themselves the language they need for particular tasks.