Municipal Capacity Assessment Tool (MCAT)

for Lebanese Municipalities and Federations of Municipalities

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Facilitation/User's Manual

I. Goals of the MCAT

The MCAT is an institutional assessment tool elaborated in the context of the Building Alliances for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment — Plus (BALADI Plus) Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and implemented by Management Systems International (MSI) between December 2012 and September 2014. In August 2013, the BALADI Plus team established a series of criteria to assess the institutional performance of Lebanese local authorities (namely municipalities and federations of municipalities), in order to identify the major institutional challenges faced, and thus to determine a series of needed steps and measures to improve the capacity of Lebanese local authorities to function and provide services within the available resources and the existing legal framework. It should be noted that the MCAT was elaborated by a team of Lebanese experts in the fields of local governance, civil society and advocacy, and organizational development, based on their deep knowledge of the Lebanese context. The MCAT is therefore a Lebanon-specific tool.

The MCAT is a facilitated process that offers the opportunity to measure the performance and institutional capacity of Lebanese local authorities in the following six domains:

1- General management and administration;
2- Financial management and planning;
3- Human resources;
4- Local Development Planning;
5- Engagement with citizens and transparency; and
6- Governance.

The tool aims, in the first place, to draft a simplified "Institutional Improvement Plan" (IIP) that includes clear developmental goals to be attained through technical assistance, while taking into account the required resources and the necessary activities for its completion, within a set timeframe.

The second objective of the MCAT is to engage both the decisional and the executive bodies within the local authority in the assessment process in a straightforward and in-depth debate. Indeed, the identified development priorities are expect to result from an internal dialogue and exchange of views on the performance of the local authority, and the ways of improvement within the resources at hand and the existing constraints (staffing, financial, legal) incurred by the current municipal legislation.

The MCAT consist of the following documents:

1- MCAT Facilitation/User's Manual (present document);
2- Assessment Matrix for Lebanese Municipalities (see Annexes 1-3);
3- Assessment Matrix for Lebanese Federations of Municipalities (see Annexes 4-6).

The BALADI Plus team has the pleasure to release this manual and to make it available for all Lebanese local authorities that wish to measure and improve their institutional performance. We also hope the specialized public will benefit from the tool, in particular local development and local governance experts.

II.   The self-assessment methodology

1.   Scoring scale

The MCAT is facilitated process that enables a **self-attributed scoring exercise** revolving around 6 main themes subdivided into 31 components or criteria, thereby enabling an advanced deliberative process around each component. The intention of the self-assessment process is to create a space for dialogue, debate, and collective reflection, between and among the representatives of the local authority (elected leaders at the local council), as well as the municipal staff, given that the self-attributed score is the result of a group decision and is not the sum of individual ratings. This step will pave the way for an **institutional improvement plan** to be implemented by the local authority within a defined timeframe.

The scoring continuum adopted in the Self-Assessment Matrix varies between zero (0) and four (4). However, only the values varying from 1 to 4 actually appear in the Matrix (pictured below), as the value 0 indicates a nonexistent institutional capacity which does not require an explicit elaboration.

Functions		Basic (1)	Developing (2)	Developed (3)	Ideal (4)
Topic	Component				
I. General Management & Admin.	1. Internal regulations, rules & procedures	Neither the internal rules and procedures of the municipal council nor the staff regulations exist.	The internal rules and procedures of the municipal council and the staff regulations exist, but are incomplete and/or have not been updated since their adoption.	The internal rules and procedures of the municipal council and the staff regulations are complete and regularly updated, but job descriptions of permanent and contractual staff still need to be detailed and clarified.	The internal rules and procedures of the municipal council and the staff regulations are complete and regularly updated. The job descriptions of permanent and contractual staff are clear and detailed.
	2. Archiving & filing systems	Filing/archiving practices exist but are not formalized or systematized. Archived files are not computerized.	Formal archiving system exists but requires improvement and staff. Not all archived files are computerized.	Formal archiving system is computerized but still requires improvement and staff. Most archived files are computerized.	Formal archiving system is comprehensive and efficient (up-to-date). All archived files are computerized.
	3. E-Municipality	The municipality is equipped with computers but its administrative work is not computerized.	The administrative work of the municipality is partially computerized: the municipality uses e-mail for administrative tasks, has an Internet presence, but no municipal transactions are settled electronically.	Most of the administrative work of the municipality is computerized: the municipality uses Intranet e-mail, has an official website, and settles some municipal transactions electronically.	The municipality is at an advanced level of computerization. Most (or all) municipal transactions are performed electronically.
II. Financial Management & Planning	4. Size of financial resources	The municipality's revenues cover its basic expenses (expenses derived from administrative tasks) only.	The municipality's revenues cover its basic expenses as well as basic developmental tasks (such as infrastructure maintenance works).	The municipality's revenues cover its administrative expenses as well as basic developmental tasks, and allow the implementation of a fair range of developmental activities.	The municipality's revenues allow the implementation of a wide and diversified range of developmental activities.

Figure 1 — MCAT Self-Assessment Matrix (see Annexes 1 & 4)

Furthermore, no negative scores (inferior to 0) may be attributed in the assessment, as explained in the below table:

Table 1 — Scoring continuum

Score	Capacity/ Performance level	Explanation
0	Nonexistent institutional capacity	The local authority does not present any institutional capacity in the concerned field. Although the Matrix makes no explicit mention of this occurrence, the possibility of its attribution does exist.
1	Basic institutional capacity	Basic institutional capacity, denoting weak or low performance in the concerned field.
2	Developing institutional capacity	Average or intermediate performance in the concerned field, which most commonly observed among Lebanese local authorities.
3	Developed/Advanced institutional capacity	Advanced institutional capacity comparatively to the institutional or performance average observed in Lebanon. It denotes the existence of good practices in the concerned field.
4	Ideal institutional capacity	Extremely advanced institutional capacity in the concerned field. It refers to an excellent performance worthy of worldwide good practices.

2. <u>On the use of decimals</u>

The assessment effectively offers more than the 5 scoring possibilities mentioned above. Indeed, the scoring continuum allows in fact a wide of range of possibilities as decimal numbers constitute an option available for participants to rate, adequately and accurately, the institutional capacity of the local authority they represent (e.g. 0.5 / 1.3 / 2.7 / 3.9). Decimal numbers are adopted in one of the following two cases:

First case: When the performance level in question does not correspond to any of the five scoring possibilities mentioned in Table 1, due to its median position between a lower level and an upper one. In this case, the self-attributed score should fall between both possibilities, with the decimal value tending either to the lower level (e.g. 2.1 / 2.2. / 2.3 / 2.4 if, for instance, the score is situated between 2 and 3) or to the upper one (e.g. 2.6 / 2.7 / 2.8 / 2.9), or exactly in between (e.g. 2.5), depending on the predominant rating trend among the participants.

Second case: When the participants voice divergent or contradictory evaluations for the same performance component, without seeming to reach an agreement or a unified view over the score to be attributed. In this case, the participants are to agree on a compromise score that conciliates between the diverging ratings. If, for instance, one view holds that the performance component in question corresponds to a score of 3 while another holds that it corresponds to a score of 4, the adopted score shall fall between 3 and 4, with the decimal number reflecting the predominant group tendency (e.g. 3.4 / 3.5 / 3.7).

3. <u>Objective of the scoring process</u>

The scores agreed-upon matter little *per se* inasmuch as the self-assessment process aims to pin down a quantitative performance indicator that will lay the groundwork for the Institutional Improvement Plan

(IIP) to be drafted. Indeed, the self-attributed scores may not reflect, with total accuracy, the effective institutional capacity of the local authority: the scoring process is neither a technical examination nor an institutional scrutiny or an objective "performance audit" conducted by a local governance specialist; it is only the reflection of a quantified self-assessment resulting from evaluations expressed individually by stakeholders and discussed collectively. The assessment score is, in fact, the result of a unanimous, or a consensual decision, or even a compromise between the participants. Hence, the crucial role of the facilitator, in the first place, and the session presider, in the second place, is to lead the participants to reach a common ground when divergent or contradictory evaluations occur.

There is no methodological bias if two different local authorities agree on a different score for the same performance component, not only because this is contingent upon the views of the group participating in the assessment, but especially because the objective of the scoring process is to draw up an IIP in the form of an action that achieves the desired progress within a determined timeframe. As mentioned, scores represent no more than quantitative performance indicators; they matter less than the drafting of action plan and the dynamic positive change it is supposed to set off. The achieved progress will be assessed in another session at a later stage.

In short, the aim of the scoring process is to pave the way for positive institutional change within the local authority, however modest that change might eventually prove to be.

4. <u>Form of the assessment and participating parties</u>

The assessment session takes the form of a workshop or a dialogue session, which is similar to a local council meeting. The assessment session is conducted by a facilitator, and chaired by a president. The participants are members of the following target groups:

(1) The members of the local council (municipal council or council of the federation of municipalities), including the head of the local authority (the mayor or the president of the federation of municipalities) and his/her deputy. It is important to ensure the participation of the highest number of council members, the legal quorum constituting the required minimum.
(2) The municipal/federation staff, particularly those occupying important positions.

<u>Selecting the facilitator</u>

The facilitator of the self-assessment session should not be a party involved in the assessment, in order to prevent the occurrence of a conflict of interests. The quality of the facilitator as judge and party will otherwise negatively impact on the result of the assessment. It is therefore highly advised to select a facilitator from outside the local authority or the constituency.

<u>Characteristics and role of the facilitator</u>

While it is important for the facilitator to have prior knowledge of municipal and local affairs, especially with regard to the working routine and procedures, as well as the challenges commonly faced by local authorities in Lebanon, it is not necessary that he/she possess an in-depth expertise in this regard.

The facilitator should also have an acceptable experience in facilitating meetings and dialogue sessions, or moderating discussion panels, etc. This entails a willingness to listen but also authority in conducting the session.

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to conduct the assessment session, which entails the following tasks:

(1) Maintain an independent and impartial stance throughout the assessment (neutrality);
(2) Explain and clarify the methodology of the self-assessment process at the beginning of the session, and ensure the commitment of all the persons present to it;
(3) Clarify unclear matters when the need arises, or upon the participants' request;
(4) Ensure that the results of the self-assessment reflect the institutional capacity of the local authority as accurately and faithfully as possible, without hesitating to inquire further about overlooked details or aspects that might convene a more realistic perception of the current state of affairs;
(5) Manage time efficiently, without hesitating to shorten or interrupt irrelevant statements or lengthy digressions;
(6) Ensure the participation of all the persons present in the discussion, and give each participant the adequate time to express his/her opinion;
(7) Strive to bring divergences of opinions to a common ground, provided that the score eventually reached accurately reflects the reality of the institutional capacity of the local authority—which could entail resorting to a vote as long as the final score be agreed by all;
(8) Enter the self-attributed scores into the "score sheet" (see Annexes 2 & 5) (with the help of an assistant);
(9) Maintain the order of the session, along with the president of the session.

Role of the president of the session

This role behooves the president of the local authority (mayor or president of the federation of municipalities), and it should be highlighted again that the president of the local authority ought not to assume the role of facilitator.

It falls upon the president of the local authority to hold the self-assessment session, which he/she chairs, which entails the following tasks:

(1) Send out, to the concerned participants (see above), the call to hold the self-assessment meeting, which includes setting the agenda, the location, the time and date of the meeting;
(2) Invite the participants, during the assessment, to resume the session after breaks, and to commit to be present and to participate throughout the session;
(3) Maintain order during the session, along with the facilitator.

III. Stages of the self-assessment session

1. Duration and proceedings

Based on more than 30 assessments conducted by the BALADI Plus team in 2013-2014, it is estimated that the self-assessment session should vary between a minimum of three hours (in small local authorities) and a maximum of five hours (in large local authorities), for an average of four hours.

The session is divided into three stages:
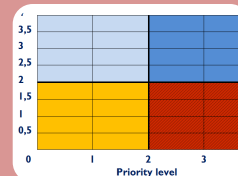
Part One: Scoring (approx. 2 hours)
1- Session opening, welcoming the participants
2- Presentation of the self-assessment methodology
3- Self-attribution of performance scores based on the Matrix

Part Two: Discussing the scoring results
Drafting the IIP (approx. 2 hours)
1- Determing the weak points
2- Setting the priorities
3- Drafting the IIP

Part Three: Assessing the Assessment;
Follow-Up (approx. 20 minutes)
1- Collective assessment of the self-assessment session
2- Determining the preliminary steps to implement the IIP
3- Setting a tentative date for the next self-assessment session

2. Stages of the assessment session

The president of the local authority sets the time, date, and location of the self-assessment session after consulting with the target groups. The meeting invitation is then sent, with a copy of the Assessment Matrix and the present guide (this document and its annexes) enclosed, to the concerned for their perusal prior to the meeting (this should be expressly mentioned in the invitation).

The self-assessment is most commonly held on the premises of the local authority. It may, however, be decided to hold it at another location where the required equipment is more easily available.

**Table 2 — Needed equipment for the assessment session
(to be provided by the facilitator or the local authority)**

Facilitator / assistant	Participants
Flipchart	Copy of the Assessment Matrix
Post-it notes (size L)	Ballpoint pens
Laptop	White paper, notepads
Large white projection screen	
LCD projector	
Portable printer and paper	
Permanent large-tip maker pens (different colors)	

Preliminary stage: Explaining and testing the MCAT

The facilitator starts, at the beginning of the session, by introducing the MCAT, presenting its goals, explaining the assessment methodology. Whereupon, a practice run on one or two performance components adopted in the assessment matrix is conducted to make sure that the participants have a sound understanding of the process that is about to start.

Stage one: Assessing the institutional capacity of the local authority

The participants are divided into several work groups, each of which being assigned a set of performance components appearing in the matrix. The number of work groups is contingent upon the overall number of participants; each should comprise 5-6 members, for a total of 2-3 work groups in the most common of cases[*]. It is recommended that each work group be a mix of council members and staff, and that the work group members have a special expertise in the matrix components allocated to them.

It is possible to do without the work groups in case of a low turnout, or upon the request of the participants, with the facilitator's approval in the latter case.

The performance components are allocated to the work groups in one of the following two ways:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
•Matrix components 1-10	•Matrix components11-20	•Matrix components 21-31

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[*] Given that the size municipal councils in Lebanon extend from 9 to 21, with the exception of Beirut and Tripoli, which are composed of 24 members. There is no maximum size for the councils of the federations of municipalities.

Group 1:
Components 1-15

Group 2:
Components 16-31

Upon conclusion of the group work (approx. 45 minutes), the scoring results are discussed in a general session (approx. 45 minutes) during which the scores attributed by each work group are discussed and reviewed by the whole assembly. By the end of the general session, final scores are to be attributed to all the performance components. It falls upon the facilitator (or his/her assistant) to enter the final scores into the "score sheet" Excel file (refer to Annexes 2 & 5) as well as pertinent comments and detail information expressed by the participants (to justify the score given for instance, for future reference, or to compare with MCAT assessments to be conducted in the future), as pictured below:

	A	B	C	I
3	**Municipality Name:**	**************		
4				
5	**Topic**	**Component**	**Score**	**Remarks**
7	**General Management & Administration**	Internal regulations, rules & procedures	2.50	The internal regulations have been updated but are still pending approval from MOIM.
8		Archiving & filing systems	1.50	There is a filing system but it is not computerized.
9		E-Municipality	1.00	
10			**1.67**	
11				
12	**Financial Management & Planning**	Size of financial resources	2.50	
13		Diversity of revenue sources	2.00	
14		List of local taxpayers	1.00	The list of taxpayers is available on paper but not computerized.
15		Collection rate	2.50	Collection rate varies between 50% and 60%
16		Accounting practices	1.00	There is an accountant but he does not hold an accounting degree.
17		Budget preparation	2.00	
18		Public procurement	2.00	There is no Procurement committee.
19		Audits	1.00	
20			**1.75**	
21				
22	**Human Resources**	Staffing level	2.00	
23		Staff performance (if applicable)	2.00	
24		Human resource development (if applicable)	1.00	

Figure 2 — Entering the results into the Excel score sheet (see Annexes 2 & 5)

The facilitator (or his/her assistant) then translates the score into the "bar chart" Excel file proportionally to the quantitative value it represents (refer to Annexes 3 & 6), as picture below:

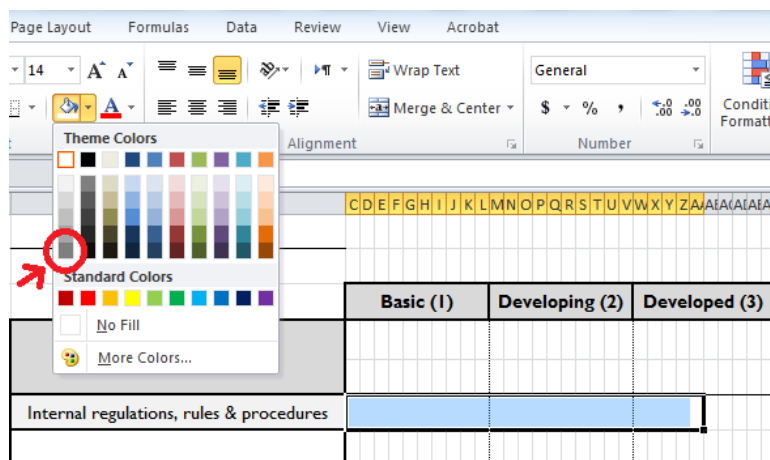|	Topic	Component	Basic (1)	Developing (2)	Developed (3)	Ideal (4)
3	Municipality Name:	***************				
4						
5			Basic (1)	Developing (2)	Developed (3)	Ideal (4)
6–7	Topic	Component				
8		Internal regulations, rules & procedures				
9	General					
10	Management	Archiving & filing systems				
11	& Administration					
12		E-Municipality				
13						
14		Size of financial resources				
15						
16		Diversity of revenue sources				
17						
18		List of local taxpayers				
19						
20	Financial	Collection rate				
21	Management					
22	& Planning	Accounting practices				
23						
24		Budget preparation				
25						

Figure 3 — Translating score sheet results into the Excel bar chart (see Annexes 3 & 6)

All scores and results shall be projected on the white screen facing the participants—the LCD projector and the screen having been installed and wired to the laptop for that specific purpose. As we will see, this projection will prove helpful for the upcoming stage.

Stage two: Visualizing the results and deriving the weak points

The facilitator (or his/her assistant) proceeds with printing out the score sheet and the bar chart and distributes a copy to each participant. A recapitulation discussion ensues while the facilitator projects and sums up the results.

Based on the distributed documents, the participants are invited to highlight the main institutional aspects and performance characteristics of their local authority, and review its strong and the weak points. The institutional weak points, i.e. all the performance components that have earned the lowest scores, are then singled out by the participants for the facilitator to jot them down on the post-it notes, **mentioning their attributed score** (in red below). The notes are then displayed on the flipchart, as pictured below:

Figure 4 — Deriving the weakness points

Stage three: Setting priorities for institutional improvement

Even though all the highlighted weak points may deserve proper dealing, given the straits most Lebanese local authorities go through on a daily basis, priority areas of institutional development must be selected.

Since the aim of the MCAT is to inspire locally elected leaders to express their will for change and instigate a concerted group action based on self-devised solutions to better the delivery of services to the constituents of the local authority, the rationale underlying the derivation of priorities for institutional development is less based on a fully comprehensive, all-encompassing institutional development rather than on a pragmatic, "small-step" approach defined by three factors:

1. **The possibility to improve:** The availability of resources (financial, human, etc.), instruments, and tools to achieve effective and positive change on the performance component in question;
2. **The necessity to improve:** The urgency of change given the constraints imposed by the present situation;
3. **The sustainability of the improvement:** The availability of resources (financial, human, etc.), instruments, and tools to achieve a sustainable, long-lasting change on the performance component in question.

The scale of priorities is defined between 0 and 4, as explained in the table below:

Table 3 — The scale of priorities

Priority level	Definition
0	Institutional shortcoming that does necessitate improvement on the mid- or long term.
1	Institutional shortcoming of low importance.
2	Institutional shortcoming of medium importance.
3	Institutional shortcoming of high importance that requires rapid action.
4	Institutional shortcoming of very high importance that requires immediate action.

In the light of the above, the following table can be outlined:

Table 4 — Explanatory table of priorities

| Priority level / Score	Below average (<2)	Above average (>2)
Above average (>2)	Component that does not constitute a priority for improvement in the current state of affairs, given the good, or very good performance demonstrated by the local authority in this regard.	Component that does not constitute a high priority for improvement at once in the current state of affairs, given the given the good, or very good performance demonstrated by the local authority in this regard.
Below average (<2)	Component that might not constitute a priority for improvement in the current state of affairs, despite the fact that local authority demonstrates a noticeable shortcoming this regard.	Component that constitutes a high, or very high priority for improvement in the current state of affairs, given that the local authority demonstrates a noticeable shortcoming this regard, and given the positive impact that its improvement is expected to yield.
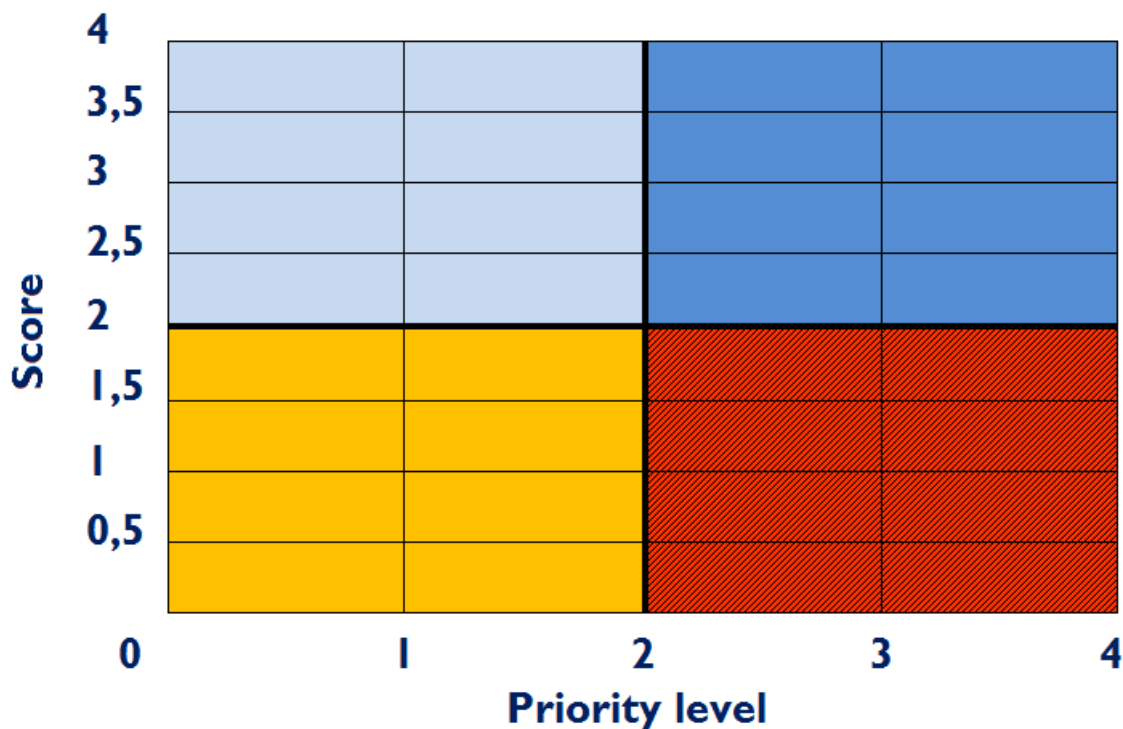
Figure 5 — Priorities quadrant

Following the rationale exposed in Tables 3 and 4, the facilitator is to invite the participants to determine their improvement priorities, i.e. the institutional challenges they wish to improve.

The weak points singled out in the previous stage are, in this stage, sorted following their priority level. For the drafted IIP to be implementable, it is preferred that the number of priorities not exceed 4 in the upcoming 6-12 months. Should the IIP stretch across more than 12 months, the local authority may wish to lay out 4 detailed priorities (or less) for the current year, and additional longer-term priorities to be addressed in the second year. For small local authorities with no or few permanent staff, the number of priorities could even be lower than 4.
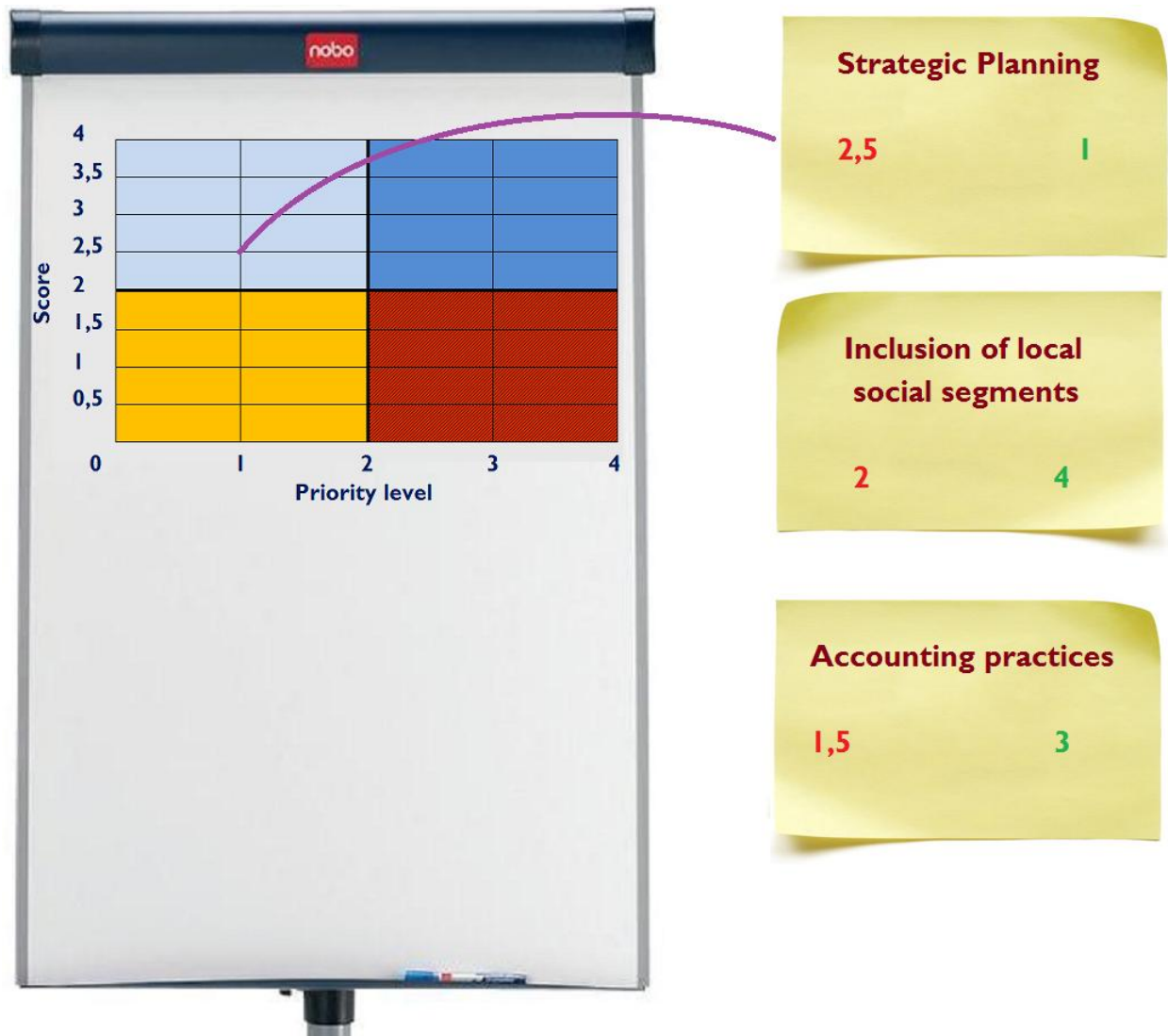

Figure 6 — Setting priorities (1)

The facilitator jots down the weak points on the post-it notes, along with their attributed score (pictured in red) and their priority level (pictured in green).
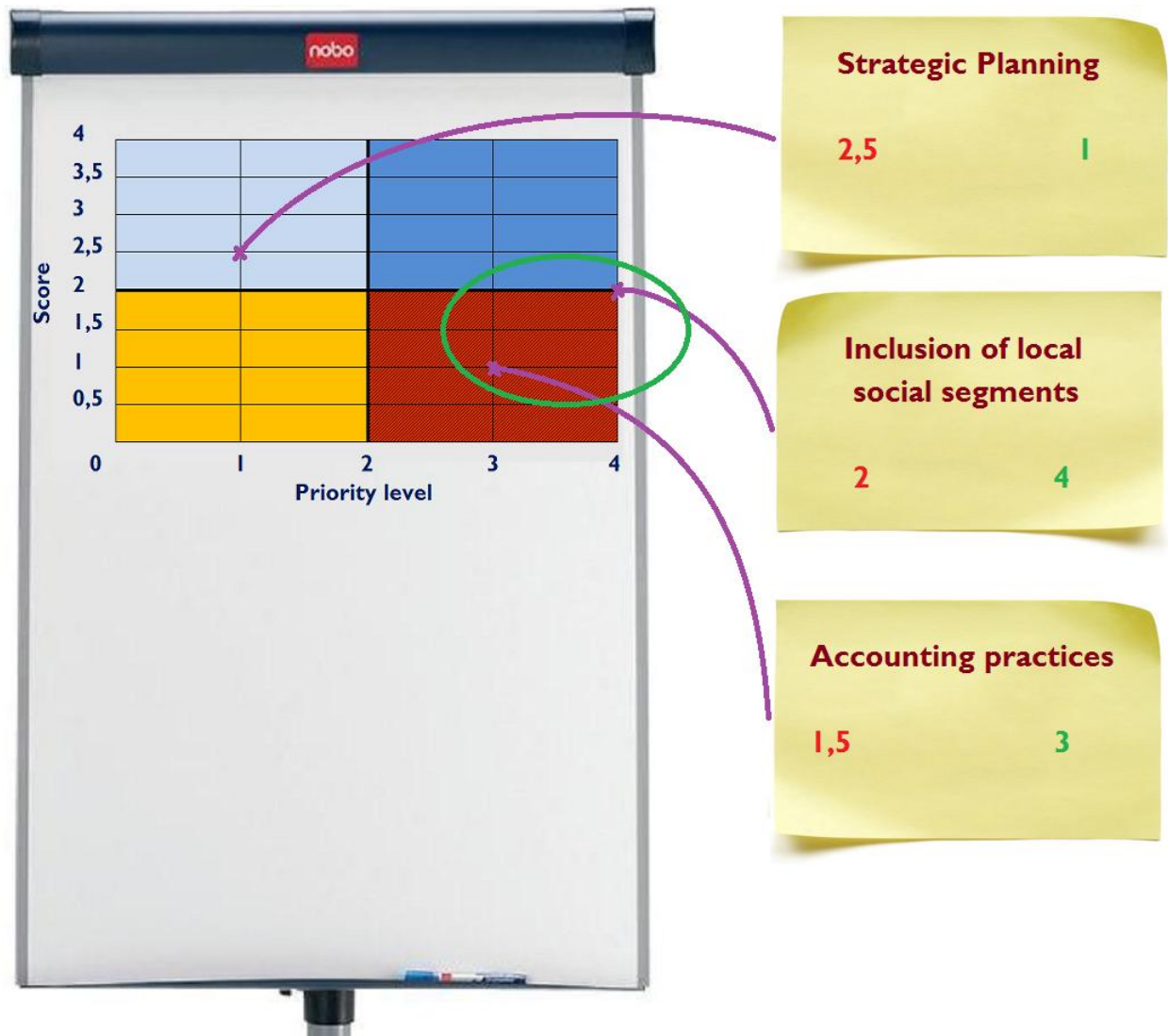
Figure 7 — Setting priorities (2)

The priorities represent the weak points that fall within the red quadrant (circled in green).

Stage four: Drafting the Institutional Improvement Plan (or "Action Plan")

The Institutional Improvement Plan (IIP) is a series of steps and measures to be taken by the local authority to reach a desired institutional capacity level (a.k.a. "institutional" or "performance goal"). This aggregate of steps and measures outlines the needed technical assistance that leads to the desired institutional goal. The IIP's recommended duration is 6-12 months. The detailed, specific 6-/12-month IIP laid out by the local authority can also include a final section mentioning institutional goals to be reached in the second year.

The priority fields that have been identified in the previous stage are, in turn, singled out. An institutional goal is then attributed to each priority field in a general discussion, with special input from the facilitator. The details of the activities and measures needed to achieve the end goal are also discussed, in a similar

fashion, taking into account the required resources and timeframe to ensure the success of the action. It falls upon the facilitator to draft a basic version of the Action Plan, a template and a sample of which is outlined below:

Table 5 — Basic template of the Draft Action Plan

Theme: …			
Objective	**Needed measure, activity, or assistance**	**Required resources**	**Timeframe**
…	Training workshop, seminar, on-the-job training or coaching, specialized service or consultation, investment.	Human resources Financial resources Technical resources	Expected timeframe until task completion

Table 6 — Basic sample of the Draft Action Plan

Theme: Local development planning			
Objective	**Needed measure, activity, or assistance**	**Required resources**	**Timeframe**
Local authority capable of responding to low-scale natural disasters by Q3 201*	Training workshop to build the capacity of local stakeholders (local authorities and CSOs) on emergency preparedness	Trainer, specialized individual consultant, or team of experts	February-May 201*
	Drafting of a Contingency Plan for the locality		
Improving land-use planning capacity: computerizing land information and using it in the provision of services by Q4 201*	Installing and setting up a Geographic Information System (GIS)	Specialized GIS provider	March 201*
	Training workshop on GIS; on-the-job training and coaching on GIS use Installing a dedicated work station (computer + printer)	Specialized GIS trainer/coach Additional equipment	March-June 201*

It is also possible to split the resources into two sub-categories: one that identifies the required **internal resources** and another that identifies the **external ones**. The internal resources include, for example, the available staff capable of receiving the recommended training and undertaking tasks additionally to their job description, a vacant room to set up an archive, an existing network of community volunteers for an emergency response plan, etc.; while the external ones comprise the training/coaching bundle and the necessary equipment, etc.

This division could be relegated to the time of drafting the final Institutional Improvement Plan (see section IV), should it prove to require too much of an effort from the participants during the assessment session itself.

Stage five: Evaluating the assessment session

Once the draft Action Plan is completed, the facilitator proceeds with distributing an evaluation sheet (refer to Annex 7 for a sample document) to all participants, inviting them to share in their impressions, comments, and recommendations related to their experience of the assessment process. The facilitator is to take notes throughout the discussion, and may use its main highlights in a summary report to appear in introduction to the final Institutional Improvement Plan. In which case, recommendations and lessons learned should be stated clearly in order to potentially improve the second assessment scheduled next.

The facilitator, in consultation with the persons present, sets a tentative date for a second self-assessment. It is not required, at this stage, to opt for an exact meeting date; a rough date should suffice (e.g. "in the coming month of September", "mid-October of this year"). The objective of the second self-assessment will be to measure the improvement achieved (refer to section V).

IV. Finalizing the Institutional Improvement Plan and following up on its implementation

During the days following the assessment meeting, the facilitator shall elaborate the final version of the Institutional Improvement Plan in consultation with the head of the local authority, pursuant to the draft action plan agreed upon by the participants. The final version of the IIP consists of an elaborate aggregate of activities and measures, a precise and detailed estimation of the required resources, as well as a realistic timeframe to achieve the institutional capacity goal. It is important to note that, even if financial resources are not an issue because a donor supports the exercise, undergoing training or introducing new approaches requires time and commitment from municipal staff, as they still need to continue to deliver their usual work. The facilitator should verify with the head of the local authority that the proposed IIP does not foist too many demands on the municipal team. If there is such a risk, it is better to err on the side of caution and reduce the number of proposed actions, or to spread them over a longer period.

Upon finalization of the IIP, the facilitator submits the document to the local council for final comments and review. No fundamental modifications to the IIP may be introduced at this stage, but slight edits or fine-tuning touches may be accepted. The final document must be formally validated by the local council during an ordinary meeting to ensure the commitment of the local authority to the IIP (see Annex 8 for a sample of a validated IIP or "Action Plan"). Once formally adopted in virtue of a decision taken in a local council meeting, the IIP is considered valid for implementation.

V.   Assessing the improvement achieved

It is advised that the local authority hold an assessment meeting on a regular basis (preferably every 6-12 months). It falls upon the head of the local authority, **in coordination with the facilitator**, to organize and prepare for the second self-assessment whenever deemed possible or suitable.

The aim of the second self-assessment is to measure the institutional improvement achieved by the local authority as a direct result of the implementation of the IIP. The local authority is encouraged to conduct the entire process (namely the five stages explained in the previous section) over again, and identify new institutional performance priorities. If the purpose is limited to assessing the outcome of a specific technical assistance initiative, it should suffice to conduct the first stage of the self-assessment methodology.

Whichever case the local authority opts for, the new assessment process must start afresh; in other terms, **the scores of the previous self-assessment session must not constitute the starting point of the second one**. Indeed, building the new scores on previous results is very likely to impact the second assessment negatively as the participants will tend to overrate the progress achieved, based on the assumption bias that the formal completion of the IIP corresponds to its *efficient* implementation.

It is therefore the responsibility of the facilitator to prevent the occurrence of such a methodological bias by ensuring that the results of the previous self-assessment are not examined, considered, or used again.

During the second assessment, the facilitator reveals the previous scores, only once the corresponding performance component is rated. The facilitator then draws a comparison and invites the participants to discuss the difference between the old and the new rating, if any. The discussion should give a special focus on the performance components which have been addressed in the IIP, and received technical assistance, and on those that receive significantly different scores (e.g. a performance score may decrease after the departure of knowledgeable and experienced staff).

When the participants are different from the ones in the previous assessment, it is possible and even likely that the scoring may differ, even when nothing has affected the performance of the local authority on a given criterion. This is to be expected and the facilitator should not give too much importance to slight scoring variations. This is also where it can be useful to refer to comments and notes taken during the first session, for the new group of participants to understand the rationale that guided the original groups when rating specific components.

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Annex 7 — Assessment Session Evaluation Sheet

Mun./Fed. name: _____   **Date:** _____

Participant name: _____   **Position:** _____

Please circle the answer that corresponds to your evaluation:

Evaluation of the session				
Do you think the self-assessment session has met its goals?	Yes	More or less	No	
How would you rate your personal benefit from the self-assessment session?	Excellent	Good	Average	Bad
Evaluation of the MCAT				
Do you think the components of the assessment matrix are comprehensive?	Yes	More or less	No	
Do you think the components of the self-assessment matrix are useful to measure the performance of Lebanese local authorities?	Yes	More or less	No	
What are the elements that you deemed less useful in the assessment matrix?				
What are the elements that you deemed most useful in the assessment matrix?				
Facilitator's skills				
Did the facilitator successfully conduct the assessment session?	Yes	More or less	No	
Did the facilitator successfully engage all participants in the assessment process?	Yes	More or less	No	
Did the facilitator manage time efficiently?	Yes	More or less	No	
Was the facilitator clear while explaining the assessment goals, methodology and process?	Yes	More or less	No	

According to you, what can be done to improve the next assessment session (matrix components, facilitation, etc.)?

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Thank you for your feedback.