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# Capacity Building of Local Government and Community Development Department for Punjab Intermediate Cities Improvement Investment Project (PICIIP)

## D39 - Consolidated report on establishment of R&D Unit

### Deliverable 39 – draft report

May 2025

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| CB | Capacity Building |
| CD | Capacity Development |
| GoPb | Government of Punjab |
| HR | Human Resources |
| HRD | Human Resource Development |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| JD | Job Description |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| KSA | Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes |
| LG | Local Government |
| LG&CDD | Local Government and Community Development Department |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MIS | Management Information System |
| O&M | Operations and Management |
| OD | Organizational Development |
| PICIIP | Punjab Intermediate Cities Improvement Investment Project |
| PLGA | Punjab Local Government Act/ Punjab Local Government Academy |
| PLGB | Punjab Local Government Board |
| PMU | Project Management Unit |
| SA | Situational Analysis |
| TNA | Training Needs Assessment |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) is undergoing a major transformation, guided by the Asian Development Bank–supported Punjab Intermediate Cities Improvement Investment Program (PICIIP). This reform is reshaping PLGA from a traditional training institute into a forward-looking center of excellence for local governance. At the heart of this transformation are new campuses being developed in Lalamusa and Lahore, both expected to be fully operational by mid-2025. Alongside the physical expansion, the governance structure of the Academy has been overhauled with the establishment of an autonomous Board of Governors to provide greater institutional independence and strategic direction. PLGA has also overhauled its training curriculum, introducing 13 newly designed modules that reflect the changing needs of local governments, aiming to better prepare public servants to manage increasingly complex municipal responsibilities.

A key element of this modernization is the integration of digital and research infrastructure into the Academy's daily operations. One of the cornerstone initiatives is the creation of a state-of-the-art digital library and knowledge management system, developed under Deliverable D33.

With research journal subscriptions, the library is designed to be accessible, environmentally sustainable, and highly relevant. Through carefully selected digital content and partnerships with universities, the facility offers PLGA staff and trainees access to the latest global research under the principles of open science.

Complementing this is the formation of a Research and Development Wing (RDW) under Deliverable D34, which will generate high-quality, evidence-based policy insights. This wing is not only staffed with dedicated researchers but is also supported by a wide network of external collaborators to ensure the research remains both rigorous and contextually grounded.

To strengthen its academic and policy impact, PLGA has entered into formal partnerships with six major research institutions, including Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore. These Memoranda of Understanding, developed under Deliverable D35, represent a long-term commitment to joint research, knowledge exchange, and innovation in public service delivery. By leveraging the Triple Helix Model—which promotes collaboration among government, academia, and industry—these partnerships create a dynamic space where practical solutions to local governance challenges can be developed and tested. The national workshop held in December 2024 served as the launchpad for these partnerships, signaling a new era of integrated, collaborative public policy development in Punjab.

In mid-2024, PLGA began piloting its new training modules by organizing training sessions for 232 local government officers. These sessions, conducted between July and September, were designed to be highly interactive, incorporating group discussions, case studies, and real-world problem-solving exercises. Participant feedback was largely positive, with 60–70% reporting satisfaction with the course content and delivery methods. However, the feedback also surfaced important areas for improvement, such as the need for stronger connections between training content and evolving local government laws, and more emphasis on digital transformation. Participants also pointed out systemic challenges, including frequent changes in legislation and resource limitations in municipal bodies—issues PLGA is now actively working to address through curriculum adjustments and policy advocacy.

To further raise the credibility and impact of its programs, PLGA is actively pursuing accreditation with recognized national and international bodies, as outlined in Deliverable D36. The Academy is aligning its training materials with global standards, seeking to outsource specialized content where needed, and working closely with accrediting institutions to ensure its courses meet high-quality benchmarks. This process is expected to pave the way for PLGA to offer certified programs and even academic degrees in the future. These steps will significantly enhance the value of PLGA certifications in the job market, offering graduates better career prospects and boosting the Academy's standing as a trusted institution for public service training.

A critical part of this transformation is ensuring financial sustainability. PLGA is adopting a hybrid business model that combines public funding with revenue-generating activities such as training fees, campus rentals, and research consultancy services. The recent local government legislation, which mandates training for officials, is expected to ensure a steady demand for PLGA's services. At the same time, partnerships with think tanks and universities are helping to broaden the Academy's income base. A financial dashboard has been developed to track important metrics like cost-per-trainee and return on investment, enabling more informed, transparent decision-making and helping PLGA remain fiscally resilient in the long term.

Such a wide-ranging reform effort comes with challenges. Resistance from stakeholders, logistical delays, and the complexities of implementing change in a large public institution are all hurdles that PLGA is navigating with care. To address these challenges, consultant has recommended that the Academy establish a change management team responsible for clear communication, incremental rollout of new systems, and leadership engagement. Success will be measured through indicators such as employee retention, participant satisfaction, and revenue growth, ensuring that reforms are not only introduced but are also effective and lasting.

Looking to the future, PLGA aspires to become a regional benchmark for municipal training and policy research by 2025. The Academy plans to harness advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and enterprise-level management information systems to support its operations. Through its integrated approach, blending cutting-edge research, high-quality training, and close collaboration with partners, PLGA is positioning itself as a key player in improving local governance and service delivery in Punjab. Ultimately, this transformation aligns with the province's broader development goals for 2047, promising more responsive, capable, and future-ready local governments.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Background

The Punjab Intermediate Cities Improvement Investment Program (PICIIP) is a 6-year local government project co-financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Punjab (GoPb). The broader objective of the Program is to improve the efficiency and financial sustainability of cities and the effectiveness of urban services, including water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, urban transport, open space, and the capacity building of local government, including the Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA). Three of the four outputs which commenced in 2018 are nearing completion. This project relates to the fourth and final output under the *PICIIP: Institutional Support and Capacity Development.*

## 1.2 Objectives

The overall objective of the PICIIP: Institutional Support and Capacity Development is to carry out a provincial-level exercise to strengthen the institutional and organisational setup, training, and capacity development provisions of the PLGA. The reformed PLGA will fill the capacity gaps amongst local government officials and elected representatives for improved service delivery aligned with the objectives of the relevant local government legislation sector capacity development is fundamental to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of local government performance in Punjab. Adequately trained local government officers and elected local body members play a critical role in contributing to socio-economic development, improved management and administration, and the provision of good quality municipal services.

## 1.3 Rationale

The reform of the Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) was initiated in line with the project's Terms of Reference (TORs), which identified the need for a stronger, more responsive institution to support local governance and urban development. A Situational Analysis Report highlighted key structural, systemic, and operational challenges within PLGA, prompting the development of a new legal and institutional framework to address these issues comprehensively.

Under Output B, the design phase, reforms were designed to ensure PLGA's legal autonomy, financial sustainability, institutional efficiency, and academic relevance. This included the creation of a Board of Directors, a diversified revenue strategy, a reorganised structure with three specialised wings, and updated training programs aligned with current governance needs.

As the full implementation of the reformed PLGA structure would take time, interim capacity-building efforts were directed at the LG&CDD and the existing Lalamusa campus leadership. This transitional strategy ensured continuity of services and helped build a reform-oriented culture in anticipation of the full institutional shift.

Output C focuses on the practical implementation of the approved organizational setup. It outlines how the staffing and business plans will guide the activation of PLGA's new structure, detailing the steps required to operationalise the functional units and embed sustainable systems for governance, training, and research.

## 1.4 Outcome

The Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) 's transformation under the PICIIP program has transformed it into a semi-autonomous, modern center of excellence for local governance. The initiative, structured around 4 key deliverables, has led to the creation of three functional wings (Academic, R&D, and Corporate Services), the establishment of legal autonomy, and the operationalization of a robust governance framework.

Key outcomes include:
- Training of local government officials
- Financial Sustainability
- Institutional Restructuring and Legal Autonomy
- Development of modern, hybrid learning systems
- Infrastructure Development
- Launch of an applied research agenda to inform urban policy.

Operational systems, including MIS and SOPs, will be put in place, and infrastructure is being expanded with Lahore and Lala Musa campuses serving different strategic functions.

Financial sustainability will be ensured through diversified revenue streams, with projected earnings exceeding PKR 3.6 billion by Year 2. A transparent governance model supported by a Board of Directors, KPIs, and risk management tools ensures accountability and adaptability. Overall, PLGA will be equipped to serve as a national benchmark for municipal training and decentralization support, enabling more effective and accountable urban service delivery in Punjab.

# 2. Progress Report on the establishment of a Library / Resource Center (D33)

As part of the institutional reforms under the Punjab Intermediate Cities Improvement Investment Program (PICIIP), the Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) is in the process of establishing a state-of-the-art library and resource center. This initiative falls under Output 3 of the project, which focuses on the design and establishment of PLGA's Research and Development (R&D) Wing. The objective is to create a digital-first facility that supports knowledge creation, training, research, and policy development, enhancing PLGA's capacity to serve local governments across Punjab.

## 2.1    A Digital-First, Sustainable Approach

The library/resource center is envisioned as a digital hub, prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and knowledge sharing. Digital materials were chosen over print to ensure quick access, ease of updates, and a lower environmental footprint. The facility will provide curated access to a wide array of academic and policy research, training modules, and relevant publications, both through internal subscriptions and partnerships with established institutions. This approach supports PLGA's broader vision of promoting evidence-based policymaking and innovative learning in local governance.

## 2.2    Curated Subscriptions and Budget Planning

In setting up its own digital library, PLGA will subscribe to selected peer-reviewed journals, identified through rigorous criteria including relevance to local governance, academic credibility, data-driven approaches, and interdisciplinary content. A proposed annual budget of approximately USD 33,000 has been estimated for subscriptions, with cost-saving options available through prioritization of online-only content and open-access sources. The RDW will oversee this process, ensuring relevance, usability, and dissemination among trainees and staff.

## 2.3    Institutional Partnerships for Knowledge Sharing

In addition to its own holdings, PLGA aims to forge partnerships with universities and research institutions to gain access to their digital libraries. This model of resource sharing, guided by "open science" and "open access" principles, is both cost-effective and intellectually enriching. MoUs with these institutions will be negotiated to facilitate the exchange of knowledge resources, complementing the RDW's research agenda and avoiding duplication of effort.

## 2.4    Building a Knowledge Management System

Another key component of the initiative is the development of a robust knowledge-management system. This system will organize and categorize internal and external knowledge materials, such as laws, policies, case studies, training manuals, datasets, and research reports, making them easily searchable and accessible. It will enable PLGA staff, researchers, and trainees to retrieve and contribute knowledge in real time, enhancing institutional memory and learning.

## 2.5    Technology Infrastructure

To support this, several commercial and open-source software options have been reviewed, including Confluence, Notion, SharePoint, MediaWiki, and BookStack. The final choice will

depend on the ICT infrastructure of the PLGA's new premises and the technical capacity of its staff. The chosen system must ensure integration, security, user-friendliness, and the ability to scale over time.

# 3. R&D Manifesto for LG systems in Punjab (D34)

The Research and Development Wing (RDW) of the Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) represents a cornerstone of the Academy's transformation under the Punjab Intermediate Cities Improvement Investment Program (PICIIP). Designed as a center of excellence, the RDW will focus on generating evidence-based research, fostering innovative policy solutions, and enhancing decision-making capabilities across Punjab's local governments. This initiative aligns with PLGA's strategic vision to become a premier institution for local governance capacity building and knowledge generation.

## 3.1 Mission, Vision, and Core Values

The RDW is driven by the mission to support local governments in improving services and shaping better policies through practical, research-based insights. Its vision is to become a reliable source of knowledge and data that local officials can turn to when making decisions that affect communities. The RDW is guided by values that reflect its commitment to meaningful, people-centered work, excellence in what it delivers, collaboration with partners, openness to innovation, and a strong sense of accountability and ethics. It also places a high priority on sustainability and inclusivity, ensuring that its efforts lead to lasting, positive change for all citizens across Punjab.

## 3.2 Strategic Research Framework

The RDW's research agenda is carefully structured to align with Punjab's Growth Strategy and Spatial Strategy 2047. Key focus areas include governance, municipal services, urban planning, public policy, and rural development, with additional emphasis on emerging themes like digital transformation and environmental sustainability. A Theory of Change framework underpins this approach, demonstrating how enhanced research capacity will translate into improved policy formulation and service delivery outcomes for local governments

## 3.3 Operational Activities and Performance Metrics

To execute its mandate, the RDW will engage in three primary activity streams: knowledge dissemination through publications and events, policy experimentation via innovation labs and pilot projects, and stakeholder engagement through training and partnerships. These efforts will be rigorously monitored using specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure accountability, measure impact, and facilitate continuous improvement in the Wing's operations and outputs.

## 3.4 Organizational Structure and Capacity Building

The RDW will launch with a lean but specialized team comprising one Manager and four Research Officers, each focusing on critical thematic areas. To augment its research capacity, the Wing will establish affiliation programs and internships, collaborating with external researchers, universities, and students. These partnerships are designed to broaden the RDW's knowledge base, inject fresh perspectives, and contribute to the broader academic discourse on local governance in Pakistan.

## 3.5    Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration Models

A key component of the RDW's strategy involves forging formal partnerships through Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with national and international institutions, research centers, and think tanks. These collaborations will facilitate co-authored studies, technical assistance, and joint policy dialogues. Additionally, the RDW will implement a transparent system for commissioning research through competitive tenders, ensuring high-quality inputs from the wider research community.

## 3.6    Knowledge Management and Future Roadmap

The RDW will oversee a comprehensive digital library and knowledge management system (as detailed in Deliverable D33) to ensure easy access to research findings and training materials for local government officials. A detailed three-year work plan outlines quarterly activities, publications, and events, providing a clear roadmap for the Wing's development. Together, these elements position the RDW to play a transformative role in advancing sustainable development and effective local governance across Punjab.

# 4. Progress Report on the establishment of linkages with other centers institutions universities thinktanks (D35)

The establishment of PLGA's Research and Development Wing (RDW) is expected to bridge the knowledge gap in local governance by enabling evidence-based policymaking and the adoption of innovative tools such as AI-driven monitoring systems and digital platforms to enhance municipal management. For this purpose, it is important to collaborate with research organisations so that public service delivery at the grassroot level can be improved by research driven approaches.

## 4.1    Triple Helix Model: A Framework for Collaboration

To maximize impact, the report recommends adopting the Triple Helix Model—a collaborative framework that brings together academia, government, and industry. This approach positions PLGA as a central coordinating body that not only leads its own research but also facilitates partnerships across Punjab's currently fragmented municipal landscape. Through this model, PLGA can foster knowledge-sharing, develop tailored solutions with academic institutions, and address persistent governance challenges like waste management and water infrastructure through integrated, multi-sector efforts.

## 4.2    Flexible Partnership Models

A key strength of the RDW model lies in its flexible collaboration modalities. The report proposes eight distinct partnership options, such as joint research initiatives, policy innovation labs, data-sharing agreements, and fellowships for government officials. These allow PLGA to tap into external expertise without building a large in-house research team. Creative solutions like innovation challenges and multi-stakeholder advisory boards will also encourage new thinking and ensure that research outputs remain practical and grounded in real-world needs.

## 4.3     Funding a Sustainable Research Agenda

To ensure long-term viability, the report outlines a financial sustainability framework comprising seven potential funding streams. These include direct public funding from PLGA or LG&CDD budgets, grants from international donors, and applications for competitive research funding. Additional mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, in-kind contributions (e.g., shared use of digital libraries), licensing of intellectual property, and voluntary collaboration are also recommended to diversify funding and reduce reliance on any single source.

## 4.4     Strategic Institutional MoUs

In December 2024, PLGA formalized six strategic Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with prominent academic and research institutions. These include the Mahbub ul Haq Research Center (LUMS) for human development and policy research, UET Lahore for technical training and student engagement, and ITU for advancing digital governance and AI applications. Bahria University will support multidisciplinary policy dialogues, CDPR will contribute through policy experiments and evaluations, while LG&CDD's Project Management Unit will provide geospatial data for urban planning research. These partnerships are expected to deliver tangible benefits in both training and policy formulation.

## 4.5     Tangible Benefits and Aligned Implementation

Through these collaborations, PLGA will be able to outsource specialized training, co-author research with academic rigor, gain access to new technologies and data, and strengthen its reputation as a center of excellence. Early joint activities are already underway, including policy-focused conferences, shared digital library access, and graduate student research supervision. A detailed three-year work plan ensures that all these efforts are closely aligned with Punjab's long-term development agenda, particularly the Growth Strategy 2047.

## 4.6     Measuring Progress and Future Growth

Finally, the RDW's performance will be assessed using key indicators such as the number of co-produced research outputs, training sessions conducted in partnership with institutions, policy recommendations adopted by local governments, and revenue earned through research services. As the unit builds internal capacity, it also plans to expand its partnerships to include international organizations and private sector players, further strengthening its role in driving innovation and improving governance across Punjab.

# 5. Progress Report on The Arrangements For Accreditation/ Certification (D36)

This report details the progress made in accrediting and certifying PLGA's training programs to ensure they meet recognized national and international standards, aligning with broader reform goals.

## 5.1     Goals and Alignment with Global Standards

The drive toward accreditation is focused on three key goals: reinforcing PLGA's institutional framework, gaining formal certification for its training programs, and aligning these programs

with global best practices. This process is intended to boost the credibility of PLGA's offerings, build confidence among stakeholders, and enhance the quality and consistency of training provided to municipal staff across Punjab.

## 5.2 Developing Training Programs and Establishing Collaborative Pathways

Progress has been marked by several concrete steps. PLGA has successfully developed 13 standardized training modules, based on a province-wide Training Needs Assessment (TNA), covering both technical and non-technical competencies. To broaden capacity and maintain quality, an outsourcing model has been proposed—enabling universities to deliver specialized modules, such as those in engineering and urban planning. To facilitate this, PLGA has formalized partnerships with universities and research institutions through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). Simultaneously, outreach efforts are underway with eight national and international accrediting organizations, including the World Certification Institute (WCI), Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), and NAVTTC. Funding pathways being explored include government allocations, international donor support, and fee-based revenue models.

## 5.3 Quality Assurance

PLGA's accreditation process is being developed to ensure compliance with national and global benchmarks. Domestically, key accreditation bodies like the National Business Education Accreditation Council (NBEAC), PEC, and NAVTTC are being approached for program-specific certification. Internationally, PLGA is engaging with IASIA, IAP2, and The Hague Academy to benchmark against best practices in public sector training. The overall process includes gap assessments, implementation of quality assurance protocols, third-party evaluations, and the establishment of mechanisms for continual improvement of content and delivery.

## 5.4 Establishing Financial Support and Institutional Readiness

To support the certification process, PLGA is mobilizing both financial and administrative resources. Government and donor funding are being pursued to meet the costs of accreditation, while internal reforms have led to the formation of a dedicated accreditation team. This team is responsible for ensuring that all training programs and delivery systems are prepared to meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. Looking ahead, PLGA plans to evolve into a certification agency and eventually a degree-awarding institution—broadening its long-term role in public sector capacity development.

## 5.5 Strategic Recommendations to Advance the Certification Agenda

The report recommends prioritizing accreditation through the World Certification Institute, PEC, and NAVTTC to ensure a mix of national relevance and international visibility. It also suggests strengthening partnerships with academic institutions and global certification bodies for curriculum alignment, knowledge exchange, and shared resources. Additionally, the integration of PLGA-issued certifications into public recruitment frameworks is encouraged to increase the employability of trainees and embed training outcomes into institutional hiring practices.

## 5.6 Positioning PLGA as a National Leader in Certified Public Sector Training

The accreditation of PLGA's training programs represents a significant step toward transforming the Academy into a nationally and internationally recognized institution. These reforms will raise the quality of municipal governance training, align PLGA's work with Punjab's development strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and build a more professional, capable, and accountable local government system across the province.

# 6. Quarterly Report on the status and progress of research initiative (D37)

This report outlines the mechanism for setting up an R&D unit, conducting research and also updates on the progress made for purpose of furthering research in the PLGA.

## 6.1 Overview and Purpose of the RDW

The Research and Development Wing (RDW) is a key part of the Punjab Local Government Academy's (PLGA) journey to become a leading center for local governance learning and innovation. Set up under the ADB-supported PICIIP program, the RDW's main goal is to support smarter policymaking and stronger institutions across Punjab. It does this by generating practical, applied research, testing out new ideas in governance, and turning those insights into training programs. With a small but focused team of five experts, the RDW works more like a knowledge hub— connecting people, ideas, and data—rather than running big research projects on its own.

## 6.2 Core Functions, Structure, and Research Focus

The RDW is built around four major research areas: governance and planning, public policy, municipal services and rural development, and urban planning. Each research officer leads work in one of these areas, under the guidance of a Research Manager. Their tasks include designing and running studies, helping to shape policies based on findings, and engaging with different stakeholders. The RDW's work is aligned with ten key themes identified through earlier research— like improving public services, managing local government finances, using digital tools effectively, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also promotes small-scale policy experiments to test ideas before scaling them up, reducing risks and encouraging innovation.

## 6.3 Partnerships and Capacity Building

Given its small team, the RDW relies on building strong partnerships with universities, think tanks, NGOs, and private training firms. It has already signed agreements with institutions like LUMS, UET, and ITU to work together on research and training. These collaborations also open up opportunities for student internships, expert exchanges, and shared projects. Looking ahead, the RDW plans to grow its network by involving visiting researchers, adjunct faculty, and private sector experts. These efforts not only boost PLGA's knowledge base but also help train the next generation of local governance professionals.

## 6.4 Working Model, Sharing Knowledge, and Looking Forward

The RDW follows a clear and ethical research process overseen by PLGA's Board of Directors. Its topics range from traditional issues like regional planning and public service delivery to newer areas such as gender inclusion, digital transformation, and post-disaster governance. It shares its work through training materials, online platforms, workshops, and direct engagement with stakeholders. Importantly, the RDW also encourages community involvement by using digital tools to collect feedback from citizens and local advisory councils. Ultimately, the RDW is designed to be a driver of innovation within PLGA—helping Punjab build smarter, more inclusive, and forward-looking local governments in line with its long-term development goals.

# 7. Quarterly Newsletter (D38)

## 7.1 Summary of PLGA Pilot Trainings Under PICIIP

The Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) conducted pilot trainings for 13 newly developed modules from July to September 2024 at Lahore-based institutes, engaging 232 local government officers. The modules—covering themes like project management, financial governance, and urban planning—employed interactive methods (case studies, group exercises) and received positive feedback, with 60–70% of participants strongly agreeing on relevance and trainer expertise. Participants recommended stronger linkages to local laws, digital transformation, and evidence-based policymaking, while highlighting systemic challenges like frequent legal changes and resource constraints in local governments.

## 7.2 Reform Momentum and Next Steps

The trainings served as both capacity-building exercises and awareness campaigns for PLGA's institutional reforms, including its upcoming Lahore campus and research wing. Participants emphasized the need for empowered local governance structures, skill development, and sustained academia-practitioner collaboration. PLGA will refine modules based on feedback and advocate for broader systemic reforms, positioning itself as a hub for innovation in Punjab's local governance landscape.

## 7.3 Summary of the PLGA reforms

The Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) is undergoing comprehensive reforms under the ADB-supported PICIIP program to transform into a center of excellence for local governance. Key initiatives include infrastructure upgrades with new campuses in Lalamusa and Lahore (operational by mid-2025), governance restructuring through an autonomous Board of Governors, and curriculum modernization with 13 new training modules. The reforms also introduce a sustainable business model combining government funding with revenue from training fees, R&D partnerships, and facility rentals, while mandatory training provisions in the new local government law will ensure institutional relevance. A strong emphasis on research collaboration with universities and think tanks aims to foster evidence-based policymaking.

## 7.4 Change Management Approach

The transition faces potential challenges, including stakeholder resistance, skill gaps, and operational disruptions during implementation. PLGA's risk mitigation strategy focuses on transparent communication, leadership engagement, and incremental rollout, supported by a

dedicated change management team. Success metrics include employee retention, trainee satisfaction, revenue growth, and research partnerships. By prioritizing staff capacity building and stakeholder buy-in, PLGA aims to sustain these reforms and emerge as a model institution for local governance training and innovation in Punjab

# 8. Challenges and Wayforward

**Key Challenges and Delays in the Implementation of the Reformed PLGA**

The implementation of the Punjab Local Government Academy (PLGA) reform project has been significantly impacted by delays in critical administrative and infrastructural components. Foremost among these is the pending government notification on the legal status of the reformed PLGA. This delay has stalled the establishment of the Research and Development Wing (R&DW), the operationalization of core functional units, and the setup of the Library and Resource Center.

Another major bottleneck is the non-appointment and notification of the PLGA Board of Governors. Without a functional board, essential approvals—such as advertising key positions, recruiting qualified staff from the market, and endorsing the staffing plan—have been held up. Consequently, budgetary approvals that must pass through the Board before reaching the Finance Department via the Local Government and Community Development Department (LG&CDD) have also been delayed.

In parallel, infrastructure development has not progressed as planned. The Lahore campus, central to the full institutionalization of the reformed PLGA, remains incomplete. This has directly affected the rollout of reforms and the effective functioning of the Academy. While the sub-campus in Lala Musa is operational, it is still undergoing renovation. Basic facilities such as hostel beds are still lacking, and the academic block awaits installation of IT and MIS systems necessary for activating the research and library centers.

During the planning and design phases, the Capacity Building Consultant made substantial progress. However, early-stage delays stemmed from the bundling of deliverables, many of which were interdependent and could not be completed in isolation. These dependencies led to slower-than-anticipated progress and compounded issues during implementation.

To overcome these challenges and advance the reform agenda, the following priority actions are recommended:

1. **Immediate Issuance of Government Notification** confirming the status of the reformed PLGA to enable full operationalization of its core functions and units.

2. **Urgent Nomination and Notification of the Board of Governors** to unlock administrative approvals, staffing, and budget processes.

3. **Expedited Completion of the Lahore Campus**, including installation of IT/MIS systems and furnishing of essential facilities, to support institutional functionality.