

# The A-COMPASS

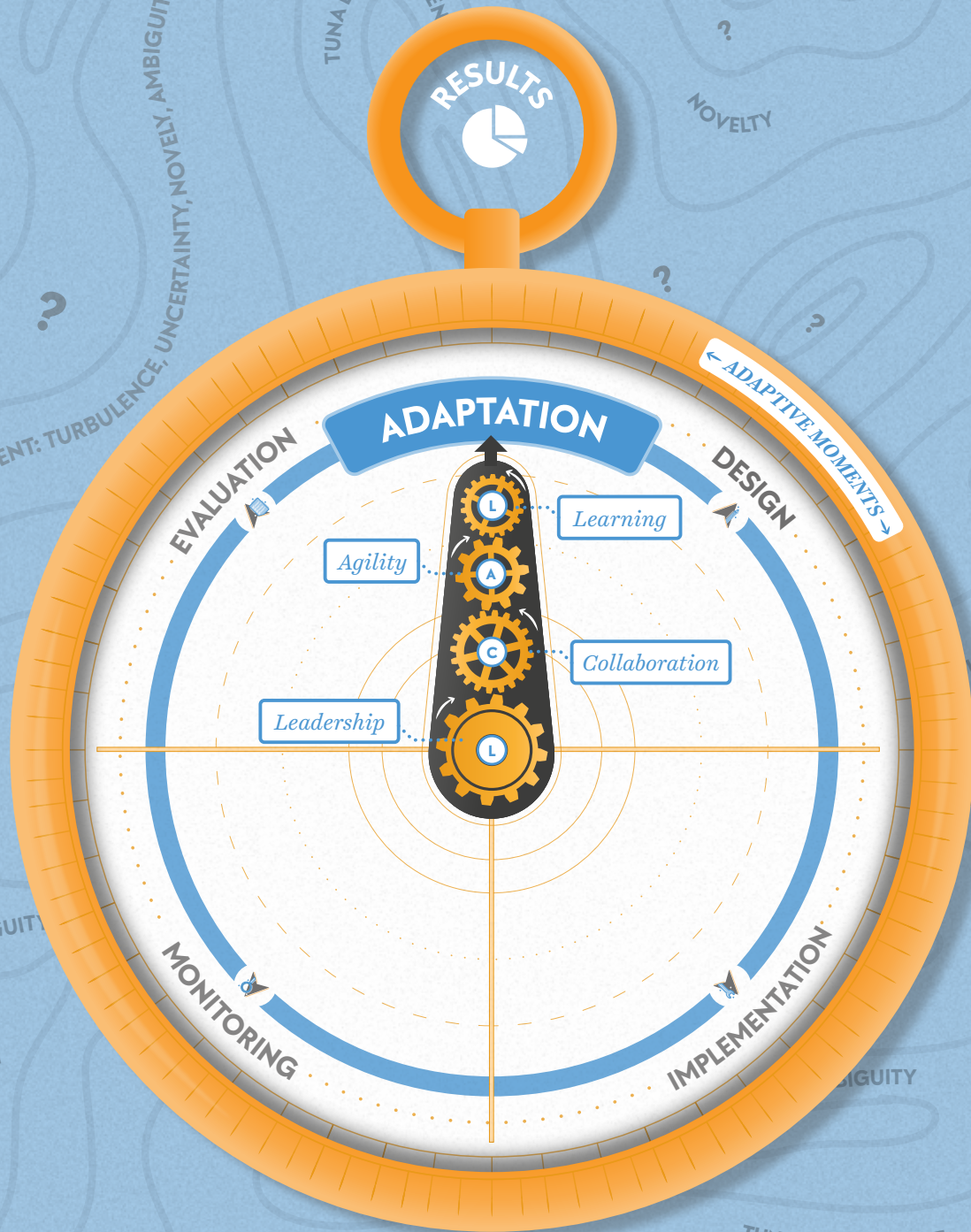
## The UNFPA adaptive management model

Acceleration  
for transformative  
results





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*April 2022*



The A–Compass adaptive management model focuses on institutionalizing adaptive management within UNFPA. It introduces concepts and provides required tools to move the organization towards the practice of adaptive management.

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UNFPA recognizes the contributions from the UNFPA adaptive management task team in preparing this model.

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Contact Information:

Tharanga Godallage – [godallage@unfpa.org](mailto:godallage@unfpa.org)

Markus Voelker – [voelker@unfpa.org](mailto:voelker@unfpa.org)

Valeria Carou-Jones – [carou-jones@unfpa.org](mailto:carou-jones@unfpa.org)

United Nations Population Fund

605 Third Avenue

New York, 10158

+1-212-963-6518

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# FOREWORD

UNFPA has committed to achieving three ambitious and transformative results by 2030: ending the unmet need for family planning, ending preventable maternal deaths and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices – all based on high-quality population data. Yet, unless we accelerate the rate of progress, we will not be able to realize these results on time by 2030.

The challenges we face today are complex, interconnected, and often unprecedented in scale. The Covid-19 pandemic and other crises have shown that even impressive gains can be worryingly fragile.

In this era of upheaval and uncertainty, adaptive management is the only way forward. To achieve effective, impactful and truly transformative results, we need to strengthen our capacity to offer agile and resilient programmes in all contexts in which we work.

To scale up progress, the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 identifies six accelerators – among them, “Resilience and Adaptation”. This means we all need to commit to fostering an adaptive culture within our business units and across the organization.

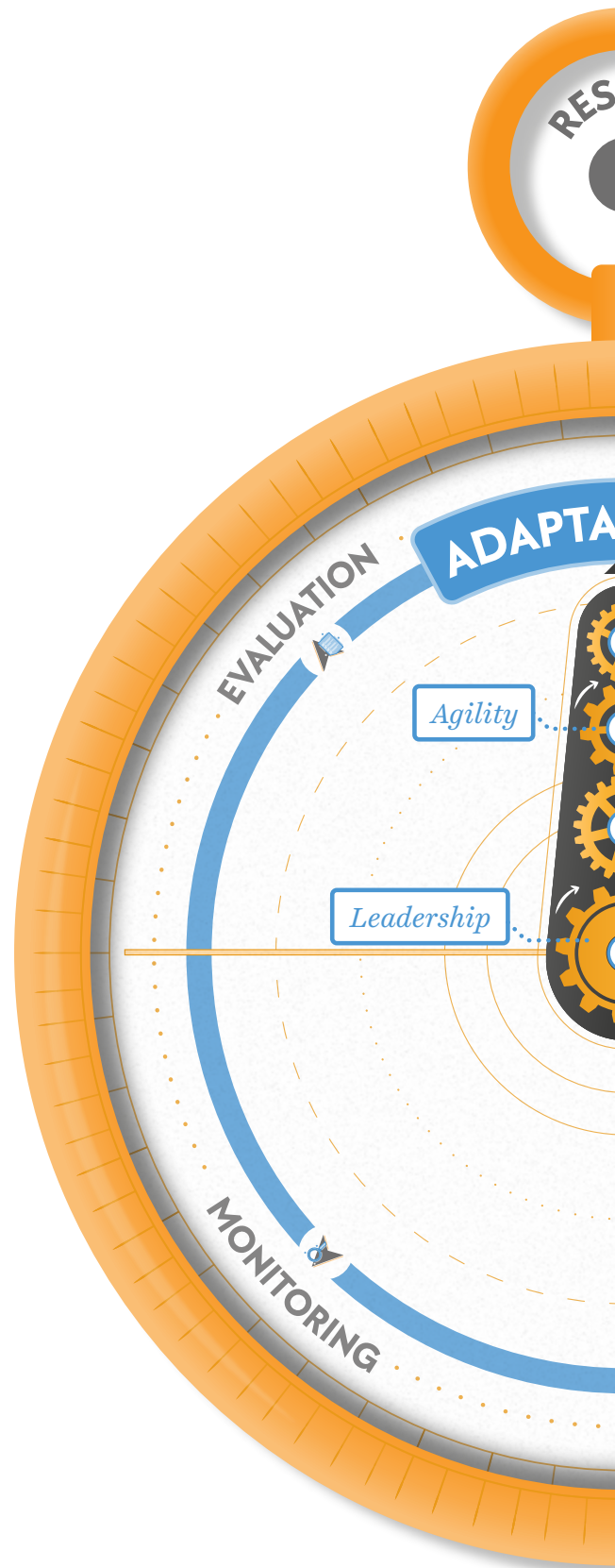
What follows is a compass to guide our journey towards a management approach suited to the rapidly changing contexts and megatrends shaping our efforts to carry out the UNFPA mandate. This new adaptive management model – the A-Compass – will help us navigate the pathways to acceleration and build a movement at all levels to institutionalize a culture of adaptive management throughout the organization.

Through a process of collective inquiry and timely, evidence-based response, UNFPA will be more effective, more efficient and fully able to rise to current and future challenges as we accelerate action towards a world of rights and choices for all.

**Dr Natalia Kanem**  
**UNFPA Executive Director**

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# Introduction

*This document charts a course for the integration of adaptive management throughout the organization, including the managing of projects and programmes.*



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As such, it represents the first time that UNFPA is defining **a conceptual model for adaptive management**, though adaptation itself is a long-standing practice. It introduces the A-Compass, in which “A” stands for “adaptation” and the four directions of the compass represent the four drivers of adaptation: learning, agility, collaboration and leadership. The A-Compass is a new model for use by UNFPA staff and partners as they operationalize adaptive management. A toolbox with 16 activities supports the approach. This document also introduces the concepts of adaptation and the drivers behind adaptation, and concludes by proposing paths for UNFPA to explore towards fostering ongoing adaptive culture within the organization.

The primary audience is all UNFPA staff. The A-Compass will also be helpful for UNFPA partners and other developmental organizations that expect to

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