F.A.Q. on Knowledge Management
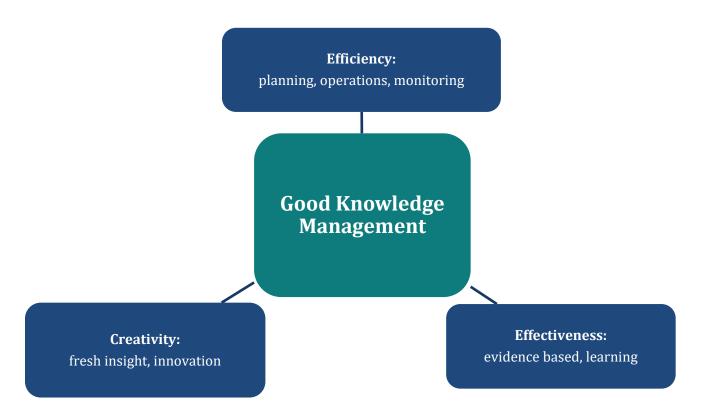
What is knowledge management?

Knowledge management (KM) is the process of capturing, synthesizing, sharing, and effectively using individual and institutional knowledge. A key element of KM is turning tacit knowledge – or personal experience into "explicit" knowledge (information) that can provide people with what they need to know and when they need that information. KM also means combining, sharing, and contextualizing information so it can be absorbed and applied by others for more effective and efficient work. For the CoLab participants, you might think about your colleagues in your departments or projects and what they know that isn't getting captured or shared.

What are the objectives of KM?

Knowledge management seeks to create a knowledge sharing culture, so every member of the organization accepts knowledge sharing as an appropriate and necessary behavior. KM seeks to achieve a consensual learning and understanding of protocols, tools, and resources to meet institutions' goals and prohibit the loss of valuable institutional knowledge should a colleague or project team member leave.

What can I do to promote good KM Behavior Change?

At the individual level, we can make changes in our own behavior to share information. How might we rate ourselves or how might others rate you? KM-sensitive organizations typically have protocols and incentives to share knowledge as well as systems for easy storage and access. How does your organization rate in its welcoming of sharing systems to store and access information like records, research, meeting notes, etc.?

Efficiency:
planning, operations, monitoring

Good Knowledge Management

Creativity:
fresh insight, innovation

Effectiveness:
evidence based, learning

Why is KM important to me?

Good KM practices will make doing your job easier and more effective KM builds the capacity of the whole institution to retain and nurture an information sharing culture. Effective collaboration will improve efficiency through time saved accessing and applying information, provide security in having necessary knowledge available, and encourage innovation through a collective understanding of KM functions or roles for each staff or project team member. Another example of how a strong KM strategy will help CoLab participants is the effective documentation and dissemination of the work that you are doing which can raise the status of your university and boost future funding opportunities.

What are some examples of key KM functions or roles?

Strong KM functions or roles should be everyone's responsibility. You are probably doing this already to some extent! Anyone can suggest or develop a KM Strategy. However, here are some specific roles that a KM expert or advisor might take on:

Function/Role	Example
Knowledge & Research Generation & Sharing	Reaching out to networks, sharing your research, a LinkedIn article, conference announcements
Professional Identity	Visioning and messaging statements; KM/Communication/Outreach Strategies or plan, logos, identity
Convener/Collaborator	Set up brainstorming meeting with staff members, retreats, team meetings,
Communications/Outreach/Website	Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Pictures
Guidance and Process Protocols	Document 'how-to' procedures, templates, checklists, style guides, editorial/writing tips
Acquiring Journals or Literature Reviews	Sign up for memberships and share abstracts
Develop/maintain institutional/project databases	Consultant databases, project tracking sheets, reporting, monitoring and evaluating
Quality Control	Editorial, content, copy editing

How mature is my organization/department or project team? How might I assess it?

1. **Not Yet Present**: Knowledge is primarily tacit or stored according to individual preference. We are not yet sourcing, distilling, generating or sharing information. There is no formal or consistent process to manage information or learning within the institutions. Manuals/Training may exist at individual or department or team level, but no means to determine outcomes of training.

2. **Basic**: We rarely distill or share knowledge strategically or to inform decisions, and if we do, they are in not in user-friendly formats. Some knowledge is written and embodied in software or hardware.
3. **Moderate or Expanding**: We sometimes distill and share knowledge in a user-friendly way that does influence how decisions are made. Knowledge is maintained and updated in accordance to institutionalized protocols.

4. **Advanced:** Collaboration is high, knowledge is captured, used, and shared as part of organizations processes. We usually distill and share knowledge that informs our decisions. Learning and performance management is integrated into the institutions strategic planning processes.

5. **Institutionalized**: Knowledge is captured, shared and stored in a consistent and systematic way. Weaknesses are easily identified and corrected. Expert knowledge is not tacit rather is institutionalized. A learning and performance-based process is established and implemented.

We have assessed our KM institution/project, what are some next steps?

1. **Not Yet Present**: Draft a KM Strategy template and convene project/organization members to develop it (see below) ensuring that there is an action plan in place with individuals identified that are responsible for the actions. Document what KM assets are already in place, if there are. Establish a shared and organized filing system, implement knowledge sharing practices such as linking files to the shared filing system rather than as attachments.

2. **Basic**: Draft a KM Strategy template and convene project/organization members to develop it (see below) ensuring that there is an action plan in place with individuals identified that are responsible for the actions. Document what KM assets are in place and how could they be improved

3. **Moderate or Expanding**: Is there a KM plan or strategy already in place? If not, draft a KM Strategy template and convene project/organization members to develop it (see below) ensuring an action plan is in place. What KM assets are still needed, what can be improved?

4. **Advanced**: What KM assets are still needed, what can be improved? Develop a learning agenda and plan to ensure that we continue to collaborate, learn and adapt to improve our work and the success of the institution or project.

5. **Institutionalized**: Collaborate, Learn and Adapt. Are there areas for improvement, discussion? Should we modify our approach? How can we continue to learn? Implement after actions reviews to improve current systems.

What is a KM strategy?

A **knowledge management strategy** is a plan of action that outlines how your organization will manage company information, data, and **knowledge** to improve your productivity and efficiencies. The most successful of these **strategies** are closely aligned with individual department and company-wide objectives.

What would a KM Strategy look like?

1. **Executive Summary or Background**
   Who are you, what are your institutional goals, what are you trying to accomplish? Why your institutions project will become successful when implementing this KM strategy or plan. The executive summary should highlight the strengths of your overall plan and therefore be the last section you write.

2. **KM Vision Statement**
   The KM vision statement takes into account the current status of the organization, and serves to point the direction of where KM in the organization wishes to go. As a means of setting a central goal that the organization will aspire to reach, the vision statement helps to provide a focus for the mission.

3. **KM Mission Statement**
   The KM mission statement serves as a guide to the actions of the organization as it pertains to KM, spell out its overall goal, provide a path, and guide decision-making. It provides "the framework or context within which the company's KM strategy is formulated and aligns with the KM vision (Note: the KM Vision and Mission are often combined).

4. **Current KM Environment or Assets**
   Where are you currently in terms of your assessment of KM? Any KM activities and/or resources that presently exist should be detailed here, do you have a project database, a shared filing system, a library? This section will also outline any benefits that have been gained and how they can be built upon or leverage in future initiatives.

5. **Challenges, Gaps, and Knowledge Needs**
   The key issues and knowledge needs of the organization will be summarized here and will include any knowledge resources, processes and tools that will be needed to effectively execute the knowledge management strategy.

6. **Action Plan** – key actionable steps, who is responsible and a timeframe.