

# PROJECT-LEVEL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

/ Overcoming knowledge gaps to succeed with challenging projects /

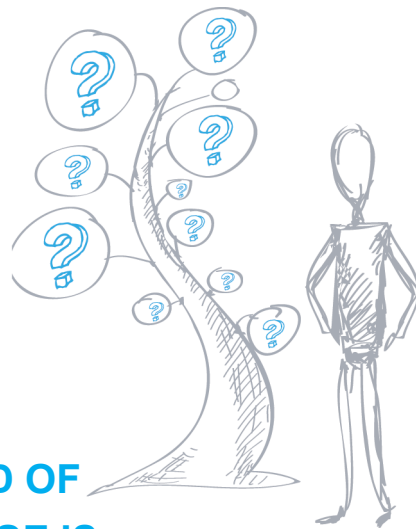
## WHAT IS A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN?

Are you leading or working on a project that is new or innovative in some way? Are you tackling particularly challenging programming issues, or are you trying to solve problems for which the answers are far from clear? Is your project the first (or among the first) of many expected future projects in a new area? In projects like these, the right knowledge can make the difference between success and failure. To obtain and apply this knowledge, and thereby achieve success, a project-level knowledge management action plan is essential.

A knowledge management (KM) action plan identifies and describes all the knowledge management-related activities that will be undertaken as part of a broader project or programme. A KM action plan is not about knowledge for its own sake – rather, it is a systematic approach that helps your team identify, acquire or create, and share the critical knowledge needed for a project. It also helps ensure that such knowledge is effectively applied for improving project results, including through ongoing adjustments during project implementation. And it supports the capture of new knowledge from the project as inputs to similar projects in the future.

Project managers, technical specialists, key stakeholders and KM experts need to work together to create and apply a KM action plan. KM experts can facilitate the process of creating and using a KM plan, by following the steps outlined in this guide, gathering inputs, drafting the plan, helping choose the tools for acquiring knowledge, and facilitating or supporting knowledge-related activities before, during and after the project.

Other project staff including managers, specialists and key stakeholders are responsible for identifying the critical knowledge gaps; seeking out knowledge actively by participating in knowledge activities; adapting knowledge for the project context; and in general, applying and following up on the use of the knowledge, as appropriate for their roles in the project.



## WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE IS NEEDED IN A PROJECT?

A project's knowledge needs include any knowledge required to support effective decision-making and action by any of the project actors: staff, implementing partners, consultants, beneficiaries, or indeed anyone with an active role in achieving the project's desired results. This knowledge can be of many different kinds, e.g. knowledge giving an understanding of the situation, challenge or context; technical knowledge of what works well to create specific outputs; knowledge of emerging trends relevant to the project; knowledge of specific project actors, their agenda and capabilities; etc.

Some of this knowledge can come in the form of evidence from research, monitoring or evaluation reports, or statistical data. But succeeding in a challenging project often requires much more than just the latest research. It also requires **'know-how' – the knowledge of how to apply research in practice, manage activities and actors, and maximize your chances of success in complex environments by choosing proven or promising good practices and avoiding bad ones.**

Such know-how is often not documented. Sometimes you can find important knowledge just by searching for it, but in complex, difficult or

novel projects, you will usually need to connect with persons who have appropriate experience and can directly share their know-how. You will also find it useful to build know-how during the project and use it to make adjustments during implementation. Good project managers accumulate know-how with experience, but challenging projects can always benefit from additional know-how acquired during the project itself.

This guide provides an overview of the types of methods, tools and approaches for acquiring, adapting and sharing knowledge which can be helpful at each stage of a project. It focuses in more detail on tools for accessing know-how. Further information on tools and approaches for programme monitoring, research, evaluation and data collection can be found elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

## THE VALUE OF A KM PLAN

A well-crafted KM action plan is an extremely powerful enabler for project success. Creating and implementing a KM plan allows you to:

- ▲ **Identify the critical knowledge gaps before you start, and work proactively, both before and during the project, to ensure these gaps are closed.** By identifying knowledge gaps, the KM plan enables you to understand what kind of knowledge input is needed to empower stakeholders to take effective action, and therefore also enables you to set learning objectives. This is obviously most important in projects that aim to innovate or to solve particularly tough challenges.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF guidance on programme monitoring is available from the Division of Data, Analysis, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM) and from the Programme Division (PD); for UNICEF-led research refer to the [Office of Research – Innocenti](#); evaluation information is provided by the [Office of Evaluation](#), who also maintain an online [Evaluation Database](#); [UNICEF data](#) is available online.

▲ **Ensure the project is informed by the latest knowledge**, including both evidence (research, data, etc.) and know-how. This will save time, increase the chances of success, and help achieve the desired results on schedule and within budget. Both evidence and know-how will enable project managers, specialists and stakeholders to be more effective in their project roles.

▲ **Adapt and scale up solutions from other locations/contexts**. While solutions that worked in one context cannot simply be transplanted, having a KM plan enables adaptation of solutions to different contexts. Most solutions don't have to be created from scratch, and KM helps avoid reinventing the wheel.

▲ **Support project/programme innovation**. Research indicates that KM is essential for three processes which are the foundations of innovation: sharing of documented knowledge, sharing of experiences and insights (know-how), and fostering of collaboration. A collaborative, informally networked environment is often the context in which innovation takes place.<sup>2</sup>

▲ **Make adjustments during implementation**, based on monitoring and reflection in real time, tapping into expertise from outside the project to help deal with emerging issues.

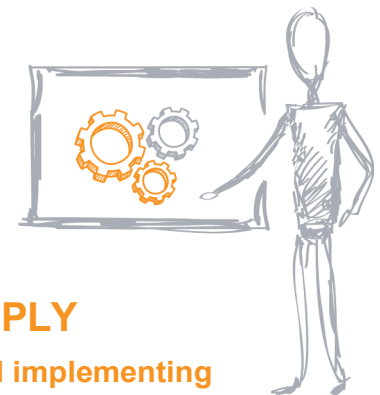
▲ **Lay a foundation for the success of future related projects**, by capturing important lessons upon the conclusion of the project and sharing them or using them to improve guidance. This helps build the capacity of the organization, its staff, and its partners.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Marina du Plessis](#), "The role of knowledge management in innovation", Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol. 11 Issue 4 (2007), pp.20 - 29

A well-crafted KM plan will enable you to select simple, practical tools and methods to achieve the foregoing objectives, and will help you decide when (i.e., at what stage of the project) to apply these tools. It will enable you to 'target' knowledge effectively to empower specific project actors, and it will also help to identify needed resources. It will help you tailor KM activities so that they directly contribute to project goals and objectives, and avoid the problems associated with piece-meal knowledge sharing activities that take place too late or in an untargeted way.

A project KM plan will also enable you to monitor how knowledge is being applied within the project. Accountability is determined ahead of the project implementation, making it easy to follow up and to track and evaluate the efficacy of KM-related activities in ensuring the project's success. This will help demonstrate the impact of KM for senior management.



## HOW TO APPLY

### Developing and implementing your KM action plan

Projects usually have four phases:

1. Inception – project is being conceptualized.
2. Planning – detailed plans are made and resources assigned.
3. Implementation.
4. Closure – final wrap-up.

**Creating a KM plan is best done during the inception phase**, when the project goals are being conceptualized, but before the resources have been allocated. This will enable the KM plan to influence, and be included in, the overall project plan. KM planning can also be introduced in later phases, but

this is less desirable: later introduction diminishes the potential positive impact of KM planning, and normally requires adjustments in processes and resources which may be hard to accommodate when the project is already running.

There are three steps to project-level KM planning (designated A, B and C to avoid confusion with the project phases).

**Step A:** Gather inputs for your KM plan and define your knowledge objectives.

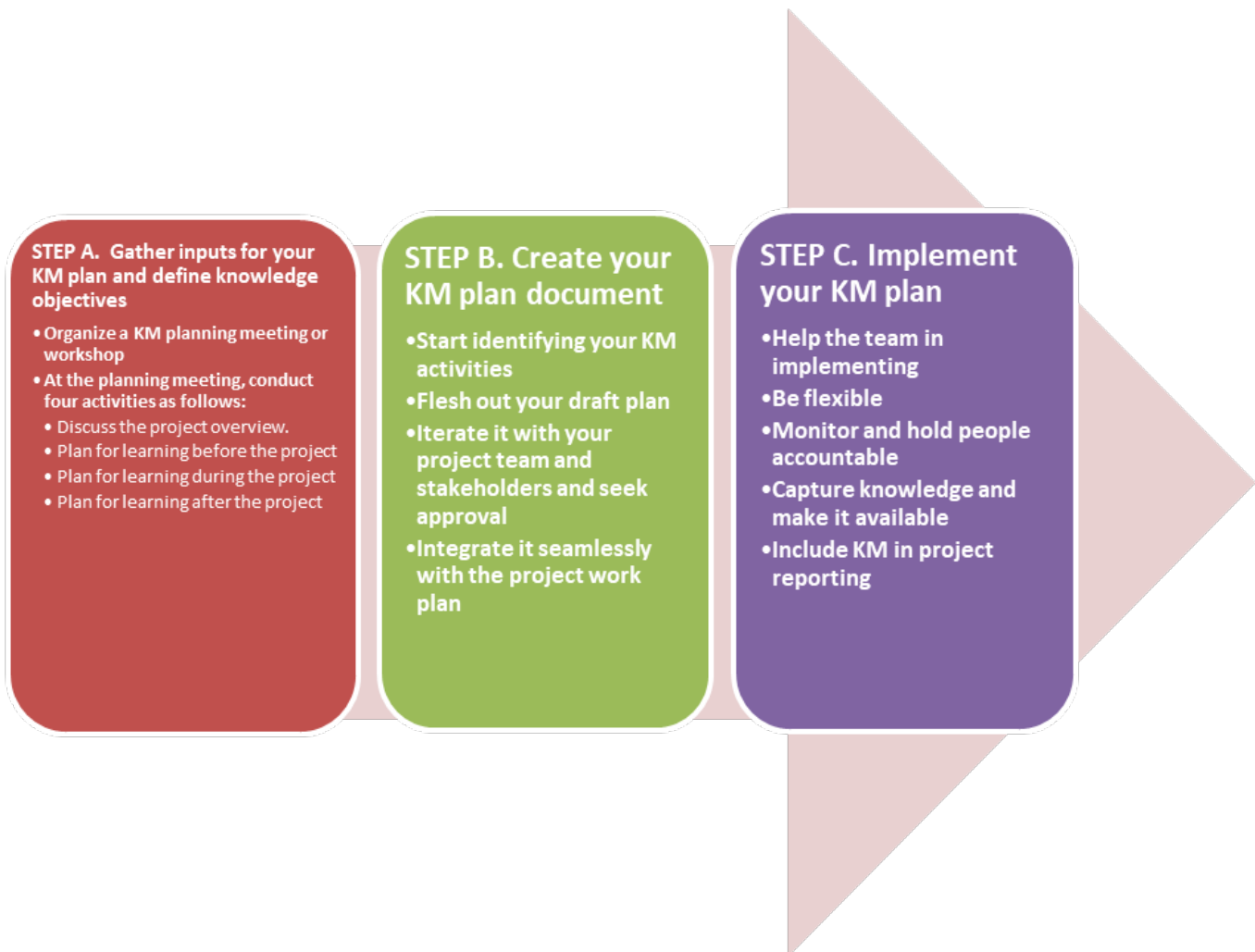
**Step B:** Create your KM plan document: define the KM activities which will support your knowledge objectives, iterate the plan

with colleagues and stakeholders, and get the necessary approvals. Both steps A and B ideally occur during project inception.

**Step C:** Implement the plan in the context of your project, by carrying out appropriate KM activities at all subsequent stages of the project: project planning, project implementation and monitoring, and project closure.

The steps are summarized in Diagram 1, and described in more detail below.

**Diagram 1.**  
**Steps in developing and implementing your KM action plan**



## STEP A. Gather inputs for your KM plan and define knowledge objectives

During this phase, focus on determining what knowledge is needed to meet project goals.

**1. Organize a KM planning meeting or workshop**, as a part of the project inception process. Involve the whole project team, any technical experts who will play a key role, KM staff, and if possible representatives of other stakeholders. The meeting may be conducted as a half-day or full day session, or as a series of shorter workshops, depending on how complex the project is.

Consider engaging an external facilitator to run the meeting so that everyone in the team can participate. A skilled facilitator can engage the team and help them make the best of their collective expertise to obtain fresh insights. (If facilitating yourself, see the overview of Facilitation in this Toolbox.)

### 2. At the planning meeting, conduct four activities as follows:

- Discuss the project overview.
- Plan for learning before the project (during the project planning phase).
- Plan for learning during the project (during project implementation).
- Plan for learning after the project (during project closure).

These four activities are detailed below:

▲ **2.a. Conduct a brief overview analysis of the project** to ensure there is clarity on the following questions. Your facilitator, if you have one, will lead this and the subsequent activities at the planning meeting. This part of the meeting should not take much time. The project overview includes answering the following questions:

- The purpose of the project: What are the expected outcomes?
- The results chain: What is the sequence of events and actions required to achieve the desired outcomes? Don't go into too much detail; just ensure all participants have a clear overview of the results chain.
- Key actors: Who are the persons (individuals/roles, or groups/categories of people) who must make decisions or act, as a part of the results chain? Note that such actors may include staff, partners, beneficiaries or other stakeholders. **All these actors should be distinctly identified**, to enable moving on to the next step.

▲ **2.b. Plan for learning before the project** by analyzing, one by one, each of the key actors' knowledge needs. Use a document such as the one shown in Table 1 below (KM planning template) to record this information. Have the meeting participants consider the following issues for each actor:

- **What is the actor's role in the project**, and what are the main decisions/actions expected from them? Note this information briefly but clearly
- **Identify areas of critical knowledge: What types of knowledge do they need to have to support their decisions/actions and achieve the best results?** Give special consideration to any knowledge required that is new, not generally available, or that responds to specific challenges and concerns in the project. Get inputs on this question from the project leader(s), the best available technical experts, and if possible directly from the stakeholders as well. Relevant types of knowledge might include:
  - Knowledge about the situation of children and women.
  - Knowledge about the underlying causes/drivers of the situation of children.

- Knowledge about effective interventions to address the situation of children.
- Knowledge about how to implement interventions successfully.

• **Identify the gaps: Of the areas of critical knowledge, are there any that the actor does not, or may not, have?** This question is at the heart of planning effective KM for a project: it helps you focus on acquiring the knowledge you really need for success.

Knowledge gaps may occur for many reasons: insufficient experience or training in an area; new research that has not yet been disseminated or absorbed into practice; new technology requiring guidance or procedures to be used successfully; lack of know-how; or new challenges that as yet have no simple, clear solutions (the most difficult of these are called ‘wicked problems’ or ‘complex adaptive challenges’).

• **Obtain suggestions from participants that will help to fill the gaps** by supporting the actors in acquiring the needed knowledge. The suggestions gathered during the planning meeting will subsequently be fleshed out while drafting the actual plan. Suggestions can be clustered as follows: Simple procedural knowledge (e.g. SOPs or simple guidance); complicated technical knowledge and evidence (research, data, technical manuals); or know-how (from persons who have implemented similar projects successfully).

▲ **2.c. Plan for learning during the project**, by identifying the knowledge opportunities and needs that will arise as the project is being implemented. Learning happens in all phases of the project cycle, and especially during project implementation. Learning during the project can be applied to improve the implementation of the current project or captured as lessons for future projects. At the meeting, get your participants’ inputs and suggestions for all the following types of learning activities:

• **Monitoring of your project with a view to making needed adjustments during implementation.**

Adjustments may be needed to bring the project on track, particularly when there are deviations between targets and actual performance. Make plans to assess new/changed knowledge needs during the project and try to leave some resources (both time and money) available to address these needs, especially during projects tackling particularly tough or uncertain challenges. The needed adjustments may be relatively small ones, i.e. ‘tweaks’ to the way the project is being run. However, if you are addressing a new or particularly difficult challenge, the needed adjustments may be larger, or may even include adopting new directions or new project methods, based on the knowledge you acquire during the project. KM tools can be particularly useful for making adjustments ‘on the go’; the most important (and simplest) of these tools is the After Action Review. See Table 2 below for additional suggestions.

• **Acquiring and sharing additional knowledge with project actors/stakeholders, during implementation.** This may become necessary if your project monitoring indicates that stakeholders still lack essential knowledge. Once again, knowledge may be simple, procedural knowledge, available from manuals, implementation guides and other standard reference materials; complex, technical knowledge, perhaps acquired through commissioning additional research; or know-how, acquired from persons with the right kind of experience, or by collecting tacit knowledge from project participants through self-reflection and peer review throughout the project. Because the needs are only identified during the project, you will need to be flexible in making allowances for this kind of knowledge acquisition.

- **Monitoring of your KM plan.** This includes answering the following questions during implementation: Are the planned knowledge acquisition/sharing activities taking place? Are they successful, according to the key actors who are supposed to benefit from the knowledge? If not successful, what action is needed and by whom? Ensure there are feedback mechanisms in place to obtain input from the key actors and stakeholders regarding their key knowledge gaps and how they are being addressed, and ensure clear accountabilities for taking action as needed.

▲ **2.d. Plan for learning after the project (at project closure).** This is your last activity during the meeting/process to gather inputs. Highlight for the team the need to identify and document lessons learned, and to share the results with those who can benefit from them, within your organization and outside. Propose KM activities that will enable you to assess the project as a whole. While these activities will be done upon project completion, it is necessary to sensitize the group regarding the need for them, and to have a shared understanding of the process and the benefits even before the project starts. The classic method for learning after the project is the Retrospect; see below for other suggestions on KM tools for learning after the project, during project closure.

Note that KM activities for learning during project closure are complementary to (not a replacement for) an evaluation. KM activities during project closure take advantage, while memories are still fresh, of the experiences of the implementing team, who are the ones most familiar with the project and with the factors that critically affected its success.

## STEP B. Create your KM plan document

**1. Start identifying your KM activities based on all the inputs gathered during the planning sessions.** If you used Table 1 below to gather these inputs, then complete the last two columns (the KM actions, and the responsibility, deadline and costs) of the Table now, to help you draft the text of the document. You can include the full Table as an annex to your KM plan.

Take note of the following as you work on the last two columns:

▲ **If the needed knowledge is simple, procedural knowledge** that is well known, then look for standard operating procedures, simple guidance, basic training materials, etc.

▲ **If the needed knowledge is technical,** then look for relevant evidence such as research, studies, evaluations, technical manuals, data, etc. In addition, you might need technical experts to summarize, adapt or combine this knowledge, in order to effectively fill the gaps you have identified. If gaps yet remain after compiling evidence and consulting experts, you may need to commission your own technical research or data collection.

▲ **If the needed knowledge is know-how about how to succeed in a particular implementation context, or about how to apply approaches/methods which your team is lacking in practical experience with,** then look to identify people with the right know-how, and plan to tap their knowledge via collaborative methods such as Peer Assist or Communities of Practice. (See suggested methods below in Table 2.) People with know-how may be in your organization, or outside. If know-how is critical to success, then you will need to find a way to get their inputs; luckily, most people who have essential experience, and who can trust those who ask for their help, will respond positively to reasonable requests for help.

- Another option is to look for case studies or other documentation of similar initiatives from other countries or projects which might include relevant knowledge. Once these are identified you can reach out to those who implemented the project to learn more about their experience.

▲ **If the challenge is the technical skills of stakeholders to apply knowledge or know-how**, then consider whether training or other learning activities might be appropriate. If so, try to locate relevant learning opportunities; start with your organization's official learning system (for UNICEF, this is Agora) and continue with other means. Note that learning activities can help develop generic technical skills, but they will need to be complemented with the other approaches mentioned here to support the application of learning in specific contexts.

▲ **Consider how best to transfer each type of knowledge to the project actors who need it, and how to ensure they can use it for the intended purposes.** Key considerations for transfer include the format and means of dissemination (documents on websites, printed material, multimedia, in-person presentations, conversations, peer learning, etc.) and the skills and preferences of the actors. Key considerations for knowledge use include language and technical skills of the actors; the culture and organizational environment they operate in; and their incentives, including both individual and institutional incentives.

▲ **By contrast, if you are dealing with a challenge where the path to success is not completely clear – because it is a new challenge, or it is different in important ways from similar situations in the past – then you may have to discover the needed knowledge during the project implementation by trial and iteration.** An example would be a project that seeks to overcome bottlenecks to scale up high-impact interventions: the interventions have succeeded on a small scale, but scaling

up presents unique challenges that will require knowledge to overcome, and this knowledge is unlikely to be fully available before the project begins. In situations where the path to success is not clear, you may not be able to fully learn before the project. Instead you may need to maximize your learning **during** the project.

- In this case, as an initial step during the planning phase, you might want to identify some simple assumptions based on the available evidence, and design your project to achieve its goal accordingly. Then, during the project implementation phase, you can use reflective tools such as After Action Review to identify lessons and make course corrections. You might even try more than one approach in parallel to compare them. If you take this more adaptive approach it is important to document your experience throughout to identify the lessons identified, and the course corrections you apply, as they occur.

▲ **This phase – step B, drafting of the plan – is when expertise and knowledge of KM will be required to select the right activities or tools:** the ones that will help meet the most important knowledge needs that you identified during the gathering of inputs, for all phases of the project cycle. Activities must also be ones that you and your team can successfully apply.

- For basic guidance, refer to Table 2 (below), which suggests some appropriate KM methods and tools from this Toolbox.<sup>3</sup> Select cost-effective methods and tools that enable the access, use and sharing of knowledge. Use existing KM resources, systems and tools (including national systems and agency-specific tools), and build on them. Ensure that lessons and insights (including both successes and failures) from your KM work

<sup>3</sup> For more detailed guidance, use the Quick Guide to Choosing a Tool, found on the first pages of the full UNICEF Knowledge Exchange Toolbox, Volume 2. There are many more methods and tools that can be adapted for use in a KM plan.



and project monitoring exercise are captured in a manner that is consistent and useful for the rest of the organization even after the project concludes. This will ensure that future projects can benefit from your experiences.

- When selecting KM activities for use during project **implementation**, be sure to build in some flexibility. You may need to implement additional knowledge gathering efforts during the project, some of which may be collaborative/direct knowledge sharing, e.g. via expert interviews or peer assists.
- When selecting activities for use during project **closure**, in addition to capturing and sharing learnings with your own organization, plan (if the nature of your project permits) to share beyond your organization as well. Sharing externally will help provide a 'global public good' in the form of knowledge relevant to the type of project you have undertaken. Such sharing events also normally provide a good opportunity to learn from lessons learned by other organizations, which can then be taken back to your organization.

**2. Once you have selected appropriate activities, flesh out your draft plan.** Use the detailed checklist in Annex 1 as a guide for what your plan should include. Decide who will be responsible for the various KM-related activities proposed. Establish timelines, fix deadlines and create benchmarks/ milestones for monitoring purposes. Take account of what resources (time, money, knowledge resources, systems/ platforms, etc.) will be made available.

Remember, small projects benefit the most from simple, straightforward KM plans; don't overdo the planning effort, and focus most on meeting the most important knowledge objectives. Large, complex projects may require a correspondingly more sophisticated KM plan.

**3. Once you have created a complete draft, iterate it with your project team and stakeholders and seek approval.** Share it transparently with them, allow them all to see each other's comments and revise the draft until it is clear, practical, as simple as possible (but no simpler), and has both their buy-in and any needed approvals from the project owner and senior managers.

**4. Once approved, your KM plan document should be integrated seamlessly with the project work plan,** to embed the needed KM activities, with appropriate resourcing and accountabilities. In this way, your leadership and team will make appropriate commitments, which are necessary for ensuring that KM activities are carried out.

### STEP C. Implement your KM plan

**Implement KM-related activities throughout the project as defined by your KM plan.** Keep the following in mind during implementation:

- ▲ KM plan implementation should normally begin even while the project itself is still in the planning phase. During the project planning phase, your KM activities will likely focus on acquisition of key knowledge required to empower specific actors, as identified during your KM planning process.
- ▲ Identify quick wins that can show results and help the team get started on implementing the plan.
- ▲ Be flexible, as there may be times when a method or tool you have selected in advance

does not fit, and it may need to be dropped or replaced. Don't stick rigidly to the plan.

- ▲ Let the longer-term KM plan unfold progressively. Do not be overwhelmed by the bigger picture; focus on each step at a time.
- ▲ During project implementation, your focus will likely shift to monitoring of the KM plan, and to use of KM tools (e.g. regular After Action Reviews or other feedback loops) to help monitor the project as a whole. Review your goals, track inputs and outputs, and hold people accountable.
- ▲ Ensure that lessons are documented and stored in proper systems that both your project team and succeeding project teams can access.
- ▲ If it becomes clear that adjustments are needed, either to the KM activities or the project implementation, you may need to revise your KM processes on the fly, choosing appropriate methods to discover, and fill, any additional knowledge gaps.
- ▲ During project closure, you will likely have structured reviews (one or several, probably including a Retrospect) to create written products for capturing and sharing project lessons. Once these reviews are complete, ensure that captured knowledge from the project is shared appropriately, by posting it online (perhaps in several locations, such as repositories, knowledge bases, communities of practice, and websites), sharing it via email, webinar or brown bag lunch sessions, and/or using it as inputs for a publication.
- ▲ Regarding project reporting, both during implementation and at closure: Include knowledge management in your reporting as appropriate. Report on what was done, and how it helped achieve results. Seek out the views of project managers and stakeholders, in the form of descriptions, brief stories and personal assessments: often, it may be difficult to

numerically 'measure' the impact of knowledge management, but project managers can often themselves identify and describe what impact it had, and how they saw that KM enabled the achievement of results.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



- ▲ Keep the focus of all project KM activities on the most important knowledge you need for project success.
- ▲ Do not get distracted by terminology and definitions. People tend to have differing views on KM terms and definitions. Focus instead on the activity and results.
- ▲ There is no 'one approach' to represent the best in KM planning. There are many good examples of KM plans available (reports, case studies, statistical analyses, feedback from experts and personal experiences):
  - Select what fits your needs.
  - Adapt and re-use.
  - Build on it as needed.
- ▲ While the KM plan provides structure and guidance, it should be implemented flexibly. Be

ready to drop activities that don't work and to replace them with something better-suited.

.....

▲ KM is a team effort. Cooperation with other departments and partners in sharing, adapting, disseminating and applying knowledge will yield greater benefits.

.....

▲ KM is most successful if the entire project team understands it and appreciates its benefits right from the beginning. Each project actor should also know what is expected of them at every stage of the project cycle, not just from a project management, but also from a knowledge management perspective. For example, they should know that it is their responsibility to participate in After Action Reviews, if that is a selected KM activity during project implementation.

.....

▲ Develop the capabilities of staff and partners in managing knowledge effectively. Help them improve their skills in capturing, sharing and using knowledge to achieve project goals, while building on team relations and partner goodwill.

.....

▲ The UN can be a powerful positive influence in KM, especially with external partners and stakeholders. A leading actor, the UN plays many roles and these can be used to advantage when developing the KM plan:

- Knowledge provider: imparting expertise and relevant research; acting as guardian of universal standards (human rights, health, etc.).
- Knowledge broker: connecting partners with

relevant expertise from within the UN and externally thanks to its universal presence; a neutral body that can bring governments, civil society, private sector, academia and other parts of society together.

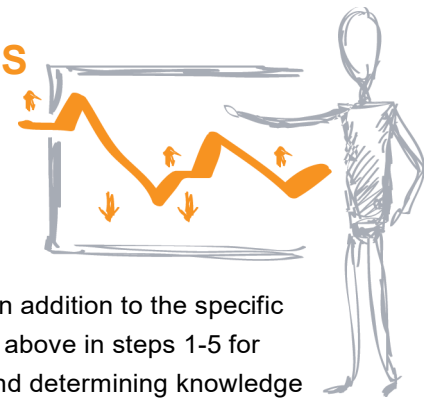
- Capacity developer: enabling partners to access, create, manage and use knowledge effectively.

.....

▲ KM planning is a moderately challenging activity. You will be most successful once you have become familiar with a range of KM tools and how they can be applied in different contexts.

## VARIATIONS

▲ Use additional tools to gather inputs during the KM planning phase.



In addition to the specific process described above in steps 1-5 for gathering inputs and determining knowledge objectives, you can use complementary tools to collect additional inputs. These tools will also strengthen your project planning process in other ways not specifically related to KM. Tools included in this Toolbox which may be useful in this context include:

- **SWOT and PESTEL.** This planning tool will help discover a wide range of issues related to your project.
- **World Café.** This tool will allow you to focus on a few critical questions/aspects of your project and quickly gather inputs from a range of participants.
- **VIPP Card Clustering and Collection.** This flexible tool will support brainstorming on approaches and needs, collaborative ranking of project issues,

and consideration of specific questions including those related to KM in the project. Examples of questions you can tackle via the VIPP Card method, for purposes of creating a KM plan, include:

- What approach has been most successful in other similar projects.
- What are the key success factors for the project.
- What related projects/initiatives should ideally be linked to the given project, to maximize synergies and results.
- Who needs to be included as a stakeholder.
- What kind of analysis should be done before the project.
- What measures are most useful to monitor during the project.
- If advocacy is required: what kind of advocacy (format, messaging, evidence, etc.) has been most successful in related contexts.
- How quickly can success be expected.
- What kinds of ‘surprises’ – whether positive or not – could be anticipated. This is especially important with projects that seek to innovate, regarding objectives, methods, or scope/scale.
- How can sustainability be ensured. Again, this is particularly critical for innovative projects.

## REFERENCES

Barnes, Stephanie, and Nick Milton. *Designing a Successful KM Strategy*. Information Today, Inc., 2015.



Du Plessis, [Marina](#). "The role of knowledge management in innovation." *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 11 Issue 4 (2007), pp.20 – 29.

Knoco. "Knowledge Management Plan." *Knowledge Management Reference*. <http://www.knoco.com/knowledge-management-plan.htm>, accessed 2 May 2018

Milton, Nick. "Knowledge Management Plans." *Knoco Stories*, <http://www.nickmilton.com/2015/08/knowledge-management-plans.html>

Salazar, Lina. "Knowledge Management Work Plans: Key concepts and methodology." 2015, PowerPoint presentation, including PFP KM Work Plan worksheet. Personal communication.

Thorpe, Ian. "A few thoughts about country knowledge management strategies." *KM on a dollar a day*, <https://kmonadollaraday.wordpress.com/2013/02/27/a-few-thoughts-about-country-knowledge-management-strategies/>

## CREDITS

Authors: Eric Mullerbeck and Meena Arivananthan.

Contributor: Lina Salazar.

Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Nima Fallah, Anoop Singh Gurung, Jasmin Sumistrado.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Ivan Butina, Edwin Ramirez.

 UNICEF, 2020

This Toolbox is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](#) license, except where otherwise noted.

Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF  
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA  
[knowledgeexchange@unicef.org](mailto:knowledgeexchange@unicef.org)

This Toolbox in its latest edition, as well as all individual tools, are available online for free download at <http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/>

**Table 1: KM Planning template<sup>4</sup>**

**Table key:**

Green cells: to be completed during gathering of inputs phase, with the inputs from the project team and stakeholders (Step A above)	Blue cells: to be completed during drafting of KM plan (Step B above)
--	---

Project Phase	Key actors	Needed actions: What do the actors need to do?	Critical knowledge: What knowledge is essential to enable the actors to take needed actions?	Gaps: Are the actors missing any critical knowledge?	KM actions: What activities, methods and/or products will be applied to fill critical knowledge gaps?	Responsibility, deadlines, cost of KM actions
Planning	1. 2. 3.					
Implementation	1. 2.					
Closure	1. 2. ...					

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from UNICEF PFP KM Work Plan worksheet; see References.

**Table 2: Selected KM activities for various phases in the project cycle**

This table will assist you in identifying KM activities to meet various needs during the project cycle. For more detailed guidance, use the Quick Guide to Choosing a Tool, found on the first pages of the full UNICEF Knowledge Exchange Toolbox.

**Table Key**

Items in regular typeface are described in detail elsewhere in this Toolbox. *Items in italics represent important/ common knowledge tools and processes for which guidance is available elsewhere.*

Knowledge needs	Example KM activities (tools, products)	Description/ Criteria
<b>Inception Phase (Learning before a project)</b>		
Knowledge inputs needed from stakeholders and beneficiaries for senior management or new project team leader	Surveys	Efficiently identify priorities and issues for action during the project.
	Stakeholder interviews	Zero in on specific stakeholder knowledge needs.
<b>Planning Phase (Learning before a project)</b>		
Evidence needed for project planning	<i>Research, evaluations, statistical data, policy briefs, etc.</i>	<i>Gather relevant evidence. For information on how to find and apply these products, refer to research, data and evaluation-specific guidance and repositories.<sup>5</sup></i>
Know-how from past projects and/ or peers with relevant experience, to improve chances of successful implementation or overcome challenges. Valuable for the project team (staff and partners) or other key actors.	Lessons learned, After Action Review reports, Retrospect reports from previous projects	Review existing lessons learned/AAR/Retrospect reports, documents and articles from repositories, shared folders, case studies.

<sup>5</sup> For UNICEF, such guidance and inputs are available from the Office of Research; the Division of Data, Analysis, Planning and Monitoring; and the Evaluation Office.

	Virtual Peer Assists	Get help on challenging issues from others who have tackled similar projects.
	SWOT/PESTEL Analysis; VIPP Card Collection and Clustering	Plan effectively for any type of project/ initiative, either quickly or in depth; analyse important decisions, proposals or problems.
	Timeline	Build a shared understanding among your team of current opportunities and challenges in a project/ initiative.
	Brainstorming	To generate ideas (among the project team members); expand a group's creativity using a versatile, familiar, and powerful tool.
	Online Communities	Look for existing Communities (or enterprise social network/Yammer groups) that are actively discussing issues related to your project. Join them, explore relevant resources and ask for the advice/suggestions of community members concerning the challenges in your project and the specific knowledge you need. Or, for large projects, create a community that can provide ongoing answers and advice during any relevant activity.
Equipping specific actors with critical knowledge to fill gaps	<i>Workshops; Training courses; communication products, including also communication for development (C4D) products and methodologies.</i>	<i>Select the appropriate activity/tool based on the characteristics of the actors: who they are, what communication and learning channels they use, etc. Refer to guidance on developing learning/training courses, managing websites and sharing information online, or applying C4D methodologies.</i>
<b>Implementation Phase (Learning during a project)</b>		
Monitoring of project using KM tools; monitoring of KM plan	After Action Review	Periodic review of activities: Continuously improve team effectiveness and results by identifying and

		making needed adjustments during a project (feedback mechanism).
	Fishbowl	Elicit issues and concerns from stakeholders.
	VIPP Card Collection & Clustering	Quickly identify and prioritize relevant issues arising during implementation.
	<i>Project/programme management methodologies.</i>	<i>Refer to project/programme management guidance.</i>
	<i>Field visits</i>	<i>Interact directly with stakeholders and beneficiaries 'on the ground'.</i>
Making flexible adjustments to address needs identified during implementation, and/or to support changes in the project plan (refer also to steps 3, 4 and 7 under 'How to Apply', above)	Brainstorming.	Generate new ideas from within the project, for making appropriate adjustments and course corrections. May be done with project team, or with actors/stakeholders outside the team.
	<p>Lessons learned, After Action Review reports, Retrospect reports from previous projects.</p> <p>Virtual Peer Assists, Online Communities.</p> <p><i>Research, evaluations, statistical data, policy briefs, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Workshops; Training courses; communication products, including also communication for development (C4D) products and methodologies.</i></p>	Application is similar to planning phase (above), but during implementation the focus is on newly discovered knowledge needs or necessary course corrections to the project.



Project Closure Phase (Learning After)		
Knowledge inputs needed for reporting, for demonstrating value, for expanding the organization's stock of relevant knowledge for future projects, and for sharing lessons internally and externally.	Timeline	Understand the how and why of project results.
	Retrospect	Carry out in-depth team reflection to capture and prioritize lessons (perhaps using the Lessons Learned template included in this Toolbox), and improve results.
	Surveys	Efficiently capture a selection of lessons from large numbers of individuals.
	Interviews	Gather inputs and assessments from specific/representative actors and stakeholders.
	<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Refer to formal evaluation guidance.</i>

## Annex 1: Checklist - what a KM plan should cover

This checklist will be most useful during the phase of drafting the KM plan (step B above under 'How to Apply').

1. **Scope:** Is the scope of the KM plan (sectoral, geographic, and/or organizational scope) clearly and succinctly stated? Example: 'This KM plan supports all sanitation work in the country of \_\_\_\_\_, and applies to UNICEF, all UNICEF partners and beneficiaries.'
2. **Governance:** Who is the owner/sponsor of the KM plan? Is appropriate senior management support clearly established? Is it clear how important decisions on the project will be made and by whom?
3. **Accountabilities:** Does the plan outline clear roles and responsibilities of the staff and partners engaged for relevant KM activities in the project?
4. **Audience:** Who are the main audience (beneficiaries) for the plan? (Audience/beneficiaries for a KM plan are those persons who will be supported by the plan in making more effective decisions, taking more effective action, and achieving better results.)

5. What are the audience's priority knowledge needs to enable effective decisions and action? Most KM plans should identify and focus only on a few very important ones. The needs may relate to specific thematic issues, or to types of resources or skills.
6. Have the needs been identified via a user-focused research process, enabling the audience/beneficiaries to give feedback, clarify and prioritize their needs?
7. Have the priority needs been translated into specific, clear and realistic knowledge objectives? Objectives should make clear who will obtain what type of knowledge, from whom, and how.
8. Does the plan outline the people, processes and technology that will be used or developed?
9. Are there clear, practical processes (e.g. lessons learned processes, community discussions/activities, etc.) already in place to achieve your goals, or do you need to develop or introduce new ones?
10. Have you fully assessed the potential of communities of practice in supporting the priority needs? Communities already exist in nearly every sector and location, and empowering and focusing them can be one of the most powerful knowledge methods.
11. Are there KM platforms (software systems) and tools/methods that are in place and being used by the team, or do you need to promote their use and do training, or create new/additional platforms and tools?
12. Is the choice of approaches, tools and platforms appropriate to address the needs? (For suggestions on specific tools/approaches and when to use them, refer to the quick guide to choosing a tool in this Toolbox.)
13. Are there core policies and guidance in place to support the application of your required KM processes and establish accountabilities, or do you need new/additional policies and/or guidance?
14. Do you have the resources needed: time, money, and staff/support team? If not, how will you get them (business case)?
15. Does your support team have the required skills, for example community management, facilitation, or other KM skills, to support the plan?
16. Does the plan include communication/promotion and approaches to engage and motivate stakeholders in using the platforms and approaches to be used, and to put into practice the knowledge shared?
17. Do you have an enabling environment (culture, habit and incentives) for exchange, collaboration and re-use of knowledge? Are the beneficiaries motivated to use knowledge? If not, what will you do?
18. Monitoring: have you clearly identified appropriate ways to monitor and measure progress and determine whether you are succeeding? You will need both subjective feedback (i.e. value assessments from participants via feedback loops), and objective/quantitative indicators, to monitor effectively.
19. How will you ensure continual improvement over time? Does the plan include provisions to review and adapt during implementation based on experience?
20. Validating your plan: Did you develop it in a collaborative way with stakeholders? Is it simple and practical, avoiding the desire to create a 'comprehensive' plan?