



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT GUIDE

A GUIDE TO CAPTURING AND USING THE KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES

Developed by
The South Carolina Department of Administration's
Division of State Human Resources

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Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management (KM) is the process by which information held by employees within an organization can be captured and shared among employees. This guide is designed to provide a framework for agencies to use to develop and implement a KM process.

Why Knowledge Retention is Important

First, consider your agency's workforce. Is your workforce comprised of a large number of employees who are eligible to retire or who have already retired and been rehired by your agency? Imagine how your agency would be impacted if these employees left without recording the knowledge and experience they have gained while working for your agency. Also, review the turnover rate among employees within your agency. How likely is your agency to lose experienced employees whose knowledge has not been captured? How will those who remain in the agency, or who are hired to replace them, gain that knowledge? Finally, consider knowledge held by a few employees, or in some cases, one employee that is not available anywhere else. How would your agency cope if employees in these positions were to suddenly leave your agency or become unable to work?

Secondly, think about how much time your employees spend trying to determine how to do something that someone else in your agency already knows how to do. Think about the new employees who have to ask more experienced employees for guidance as unfamiliar situations arise. The new employees spend time finding someone who can assist them and then the more experienced employee has to take time to explain the process to the new hire. Now imagine if the information the new employee needed was documented somewhere within the agency and could be retrieved without interrupting the work of other employees.

Another benefit to capturing the knowledge within your agency and making it accessible to employees is that this knowledge will be available for use in all areas of your agency. This access will allow you to use the information your agency already has in new ways.

Documenting processes within your agency will also make it easier to implement process improvement measures. Once your agency has agreed upon a standard, consistent process, it can be reviewed to determine if improvements can be made. It is nearly impossible to improve a process that has not been documented.

Key Terms

Explicit Knowledge: Knowledge that is easily documented. Examples include policies and procedures.

Implicit Knowledge/Tacit Knowledge: Knowledge gained through experience that cannot be easily documented.

Knowledge Management (KM): The process of creating, acquiring, sharing and managing knowledge.¹

Knowledge Retention: The process of documenting both explicit and implicit knowledge contained within an organization.

Knowledge Transfer: The implementation of a process to facilitate sharing of knowledge among employees.

This Guide

¹ Society for Human Resources. (2005). Knowledge Management Series Part I: Knowledge Management Overview. Retrieved from:
http://www.shrm.org/Research/Articles/Articles/Pages/Knowledge_20Management_20Series_20Part_20I_20Knowledge_20Management_20Overview.aspx

KM is a complex process that can take many forms. This guide is not intended to exhaustively review all aspects of KM but, rather, to provide a framework for an agency interested in designing a KM process.

Obstacles

While each agency will face unique issues and obstacles when implementing a KM process, some common obstacles include the following:

- Lack of time
- Lack of resources
- Hoarding of knowledge
- Lack of trust
- Lack of support for the KM process
- Cultural Obstacles

Below are some suggested strategies to address each obstacle:

Lack of Time:

This is perhaps the most often cited reason agencies are unable to implement a KM process. While it cannot be disputed that the time of agency employees is a precious and limited commodity, time spent in support of a KM process is important to the success of an agency. There are several ways to address this issue. First, do not tackle everything at once. Break the KM process into small chunks which will allow employees to work and finish tasks quickly. This will lead to a sense of accomplishment and allow employees to work the tasks in when their schedule allows. Second, spread the work around. While a KM process should have a leader, the work of gathering and documenting information can, and should, be given to the people performing the processes as much as possible. The documentation of a single process assigned to each person will have little impact on an employee's workload. Finally, focus on the time that will be saved once a KM process is in place. Consider the time employees spend trying to figure out a process another has performed before or searching for a knowledge source within your agency. With a successful KM process in place, employees will have access to information faster and easier which should save time.

Lack of Resources:

Lack of resources may mean lack of people to implement and take part in a KM process or lack of physical resources necessary to record and retrieve knowledge. Lack of personnel really translates into lack of time and can be addressed using the techniques described above. Lack of physical resources may be a higher hurdle for agencies to overcome because this often requires an investment in technology an agency may not be able to afford. Agencies facing this situation should carefully consider if KM is something you can afford to forgo. Consider the cost to your agency if specialized employee knowledge was suddenly no longer available or how much your agency loses each time employees make an error or fails to take advantage of an opportunity because they lack the knowledge other employees have.

Also, avoid getting caught up in the technology of KM and instead focus on the goals. While wikis, social networks, blogging, electronic bulletin boards, and all the other technology options referenced in most KM processes may make things easier, a lot can be accomplished with nothing more than a shared network drive and basic office software. Don't let the cost of tools you **could** use determine whether you implement a KM process.

A lack of resources may also mean there are limited options available to provide incentives to employees to participate in KM efforts. If this is the case, non-monetary incentives such as employee recognition, praise, and increased job opportunities can be used.

Hoarding of Knowledge:

This is perhaps the hardest of the obstacles listed above to address. Some employees are compelled to jealously protect the knowledge they hold because they believe it provides them some power or job protection. Unfortunately, this belief can easily be reinforced with careless management strategies and a lack of appreciation for the time employees spend sharing their knowledge with others. Depending on how entrenched this belief is for your employees, you may have to address this as a broader cultural issue before you can move forward.

As with any change in culture, communication is key. The importance of KM and the agencies' motivation in implementing this type of process must be clearly communicated to employees. Employees may initially be concerned that the implementation of this process is in preparation for a reduction in force. Therefore, it is important to stress all of the benefits of KM, particularly those that benefit the employee. These include:

- Opportunities to improve processes.
- The chance to be rewarded for sharing knowledge.
- The reduction in training time for new employees which will ensure that the new employees are able to contribute faster, and that more senior employees have to spend less time training the employees.
- A chance to share their wisdom. (There are few things the human animal likes more than talking about themselves and their experiences.)

Along with explaining the benefits of a KM process, it is also important to make sure everyone knows that they are expected to participate in this process as part of their normal job duties. Employees should be evaluated on their participation in KM as they are on all other job duties.

The message that KM is beneficial must come from the top down and be reinforced at **every** level of management. As stated previously, cultural changes such as these are not easy and require the support of leadership to be successful.

Lack of trust:

Like knowledge hoarding, this particular obstacle may require that extensive cultural changes be undertaken. Employees have to feel confident that an agency is not documenting the knowledge they hold just to make it easier to terminate them. Employees also have to feel comfortable sharing experiences (both good and bad) without being made to feel incompetent or threatened. Finally, agencies have to ensure that employees are aware of their impact on the agency's success as they share their knowledge and participate in the KM process.

Lack of support for the KM process:

As stated previously, without the support of all levels within an organization, it is nearly impossible for any initiative to be successful. Often, lack of support comes from the things listed above: lack of trust, scarce resources, hoarding of knowledge, and mistrust. It's important to address each of these obstacles with agency leadership and gain full buy-in before rolling out a KM process. The next section discusses how to gain buy-in from stakeholders.

As with any change, in order to successfully implement a KM program, the culture of your agency must support this type of initiative. The strategies above will help address specific obstacles but, ideally, the overall agency culture would be one that supports the sharing of knowledge. A culture that supports knowledge sharing is one that looks for innovation everywhere, where people are encouraged to debate issues, decisions are made with the involvement of many employees, employees are expected to look for new knowledge and apply it regularly, and the organization constantly questions how things were done in the past and looks for constant ways to improve.²

² De Long, David, & Fahey, Liam. (2000). Diagnosing Cultural Barriers to Knowledge Management. *Academy of Management Executives*, 14 (4), 113 -127.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or groups within your agency who have an interest in the outcome of the implementation of a KM process. Generally, stakeholders can be divided into several groups, including:

- Agency leadership (Director, Deputy Directors, etc.)
- Middle Managers (those who manage portions of the agency through other managers or supervisors)
- First-line managers
- Employees
- Customers

All of these stakeholders have some interest in ensuring the smooth operation and success of an agency. Therefore, the key to gaining the commitment of these stakeholders is to link the success of a KM process to the success of an agency. It is important to gain this commitment because it is vitally important, particularly in the early stages of implementing a KM process, for leadership to model behaviors that encourage a commitment to KM. Often, gaining this support requires different approaches for each group.

Agency leadership:

Agency leadership often faces the unenviable task of deciding where to use scarce resources to fulfill the mission of their agency. In order to gain support from these individuals for a KM process you must examine the benefits to the agency of implementing such a process and the costs of failing to do so. This may involve an examination of your agency's workforce to determine which processes are vulnerable to knowledge loss due to turnover among current employees including those approaching retirement. A review of an agency's critical processes may also reveal gaps in documentation which could have disastrous effects should an agency employee unexpectedly leave. Fortunately, the first step in creating a KM process is identifying areas most at risk for knowledge loss so this examination will be useful once agency leadership support is achieved.

Middle Managers & First Line Managers:

Gaining the support of middle- and first-line managers is crucial to the success of any initiative within an agency. While agency leadership may formally control an agency's direction and allocation of resources, it is managers who are in the best position to influence agency employees to participate in the KM process. Fortunately, many of the strategies used to convince agency leadership of the importance of KM can also be used to gain the support of managers. What may set managers apart from agency leadership, however, is the amount of knowledge of day-to-day processes they have. Often these are employees who have been with the agency for an extended period of time and have a great deal of valuable knowledge. Therefore, you will need to gain commitment from them both as a manager and as an employee who has knowledge to share. It is critical to address the concerns of these managers as described above and ensure they are fully onboard **before** attempting to roll this process out to employees. Managers committed to this process will be your most valuable resource in encouraging employees to participate.

The importance of a KM process should be stressed to managers as they often are faced with many "important" tasks or priorities and participation in this process should be made a formal part of a manager's performance review. This will provide a mechanism to focus managers on KM and measure their support and participation.

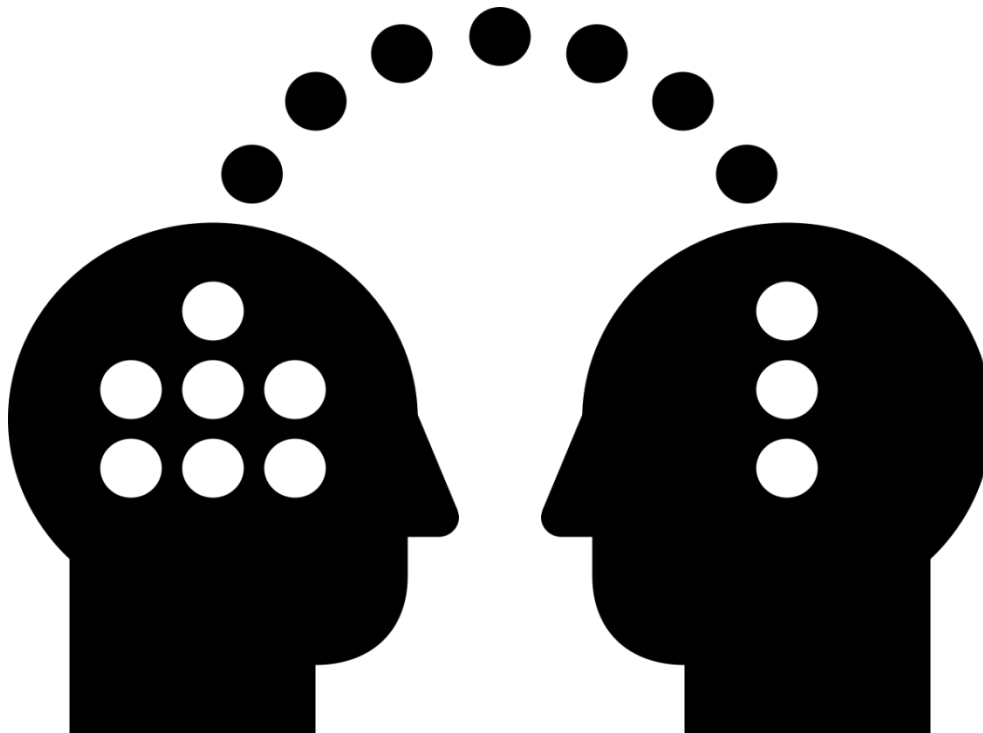
Employees:

Employees should be heavily involved in the capturing of knowledge related to their job duties. No one knows the requirements of a job or task better than those who perform it on a regular basis. The keys to getting buy-in from employees are:

- Demonstrated support from all levels of leadership
- Explanation of the advantages to the agency
- Explanation of the advantages to the employee (i.e. What's in it for me?)
- Incentives to contribute to the KM process
- Open and honest communication regarding the obstacles described previously
- A mechanism to hold employees accountable for their participation

Customers:

Customers are often a good source of information when documenting knowledge within your agency, particularly implicit knowledge. Asking customers to share experiences and feedback can provide valuable information from an outside perspective. If this is a source of information your agency would like to pursue, it is important that customers feel they can share honest feedback and that this information will be used to improve the processes used to serve them.



Steps to Creating and Implementing a KM Process

The steps described below should be implemented only **after** the preliminary work of gaining stakeholder support and addressing the obstacles described above have been completed.

Step 1: Identify areas of critical knowledge & risk³

While all knowledge within an agency is valuable, efforts should be made to identify knowledge related to the critical processes of your agency and the risk of losing this knowledge. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways and the actual evaluation process will vary based on your agency's size, mission, and organization. It is important to spend the necessary time to complete an analysis of your agency rather than assuming management knows where knowledge is held within an agency. Often, there are hidden pockets of knowledge within an agency that are critical to the agency's ability to operate.

A suggested approach is to have first-line managers review the processes used by their team and determine which are most critical. These processes can be further reviewed by middle- managers and senior-level leadership to determine which are most critical to the agency.

Once these processes are identified, managers, with assistance from agency leadership and human resources, should review the employees performing these functions to determine how likely it is the employees performing these duties will leave. Particular attention should be paid to situations where a single employee holds knowledge. Even if this employee has no plans to leave an agency the employees may become unable to work with little or no notice.

Step 2: Document and share explicit knowledge

Explicit Knowledge is knowledge that can be easily documented. This includes process information that is consistently used and can generally be captured in policies, procedures, and flowcharts. This information is often the easiest to capture and is particularly important since it is applicable nearly every time a process is executed.

Technology can assist in documenting and sharing explicit knowledge but avoid making the process more complicated than necessary. Generally, policies, procedures, and flowcharts can be created using software already available to employees. A shared drive can be created to make this information easily available to all employees.

Since explicit knowledge is held by every employee, documenting this type of knowledge can, and should, be the responsibility of the employees actually performing the work rather than management or human resources. This allows the responsibility for documenting information to be spread over a large number of employees with each responsible for documenting and reviewing a few processes. By putting a review process in place, by either a first-line manager or co-worker, you can ensure the information recorded is correct and in a standard format.

It is important that employees be held accountable for documenting this information and that this work be treated as any other job duty important to an employee's position. For this reason, it is recommended that this be included in their performance review process.

³ KM and workforce planning overlap significantly, particularly regarding identifying the areas which should be targeted for a KM process. The Division of State Human Resources can provide assistance with workforce planning.

Once this information is documented, it should be stored in a way that is easy to retrieve and is accessible to all employees who take part in the applicable process. Again, the use of technology should make this process easier rather than add difficulty to the situation. The particular process used in your agency will vary depending on the size of the agency, the number of people who need access to the information, and the technological comfort of your employee population. There are some general guidelines, however, that will make using the information you have gathered easier:

- **Save the information electronically.** Paper manuals and flowcharts are hard to update, and it is difficult to ensure everyone is using the most up-to-date information.
- **Use a standard naming convention.** Saving each process or procedure as a separate document with a descriptive name makes it much easier to use. Also, grouping processes logically and saving in separate folders can assist in organizing this information.
- **Include an “updated” date.** Each document should include the date it was created as well as the date it was last updated. Including a “change history” section will also allow you to document what changes were made to the process and when.
- **Indicate the process “owner.”** Clearly identify the “owner” of a process so others will know who to notify if a change or correction needs to be made.

This process can seem overwhelming given the sheer number of processes used by an agency. By dividing the task among as many employees as possible, however, you can realize quick successes and rapidly build your knowledge resources. You’ll need this momentum as you begin to document implicit knowledge in Step 3.

Step 3: Document and share implicit knowledge

Unlike explicit knowledge, implicit knowledge is difficult to document, may only be applicable in some circumstances, can only be gained through experience, and is, arguably, the most valuable resource an agency has. Implicit knowledge is information that can make your processes work better, assist in handling unusual situations or emergencies, increase process consistency across employees, and can decrease the time it takes for a new employee to fully contribute to an organization.

The nature of implicit knowledge requires that employees want to share their knowledge since it is uniquely theirs and gained through their experiences. Therefore, it is particularly important to address any barriers that may keep employees from fully sharing their knowledge as part of the effort to document implicit knowledge. It is equally important to reward employees for efforts they make to share knowledge.

Because implicit knowledge is difficult to document as a series of steps or instructions it is often hard for employees to identify what implicit knowledge they hold and to articulate this knowledge for others. There are a variety of techniques which can be used to help employees with this process. In order to determine which method to use, consider how the employees most likely to use the information are comfortable accessing information. One way to determine this is to simply survey the employees involved and ask for their input.

Some methods for documenting implicit knowledge are described below:

Mentoring

Mentoring is a process in which experienced employees provide assistance to less experienced employees allowing these less experienced employees access to their knowledge.

The structure of your mentoring program will vary depending on your agency's culture and how extensive you want your mentoring program to be. Some questions you'll need to ask yourself are:

- **Which positions should participate in the mentoring program?**

To answer this question, you'll need to examine the work done by employees in your agency and identify positions that require the most non-documentable direction. Use caution to review all positions when making this determination regardless of pay band or organizational level. While it is obvious that an agency director's duties are complex and hard to document, it may be equally hard to document the knowledge required to maintain equipment or process child abuse cases.

- **Which employees should be invited to participate in the mentoring program?**

You may decide to have all of the employees performing a particular function to participate in the mentoring program or you may only ask those you that have identified as "high-potential employees" to participate. A word of caution about selecting certain employees for mentoring, be sure your selection criteria are job relevant and objective. Be careful excluding employees from a mentoring program since all employees would benefit from having someone with more experience assist them and even employees you haven't identified as high-potential employees may remain in a position for an extended period of time.

- **Who should serve as a mentor?**

This may be a harder question to answer than you think. The employees should be knowledgeable, willing to share their knowledge, patient, a good communicator, willing to spend the time working with their mentee, trustworthy, and personable. While the employees who meet this criterion may be limited, there are some steps you can take to increase your pool. First, communication is key! It is vital that everyone understand that assisting more junior employees is important to agency success. Second, you have to reward those willing to spend time helping employees. This doesn't have to be a formal, monetary award (although those can work to). Positive feedback, the opportunity to expand their knowledge, and a chance to work away from their day-to-day jobs can all provide the incentive necessary to encourage employees to act as mentors. You also have to demonstrate your commitment to this process by giving mentors the time to provide mentoring. This may mean shifting some of their work to others to provide mentors the time to assist more junior employees. Of course, this process should result in the junior employees getting up to speed faster and contributing more in a shorter period of time. Only your agency can determine if the tradeoff is worthwhile.

Some employers choose to have supervisors or managers act as mentors. This may not be the best approach for two reasons. First, the mentee has to be comfortable asking the mentor questions without worrying about looking incompetent in front of an authority figure. It is generally easier to ask a peer these questions rather than a superior. Secondly, the manager or supervisor is often not doing the work the mentee is. The supervisor may have done so at some point in the past or may "help out" when work loads are high, but the day-to-day experience of performing the job is better explained by someone still actively performing the job duties.

Storytelling

While storytelling can easily be dismissed because it may sound silly, it is one of the most robust, and easiest to implement, knowledge sharing techniques there is. Imagine the depth of knowledge gained from having your employees share the lessons learned from a real-life scenario experienced by the storyteller. Debriefing, case studies, after action reviews, whatever you want to call it, the knowledge gained and shared through storytelling is extensive. Employees may also find it easier to understand information presented in the form of a story rather than a bulleted list of facts.

Implementing storytelling is as easy, or as complicated, as you want it to be. At its most basic level, storytelling may involve having employees present narratives of situations they have faced over some period of time, for example, each month or quarter, and having the “lessons learned” from the situation recorded for future reference. Others can be invited to comment on what went well or what they would have done differently.

Another option is to have employees record a formal case study in writing or using audio/video recordings so that this information can be retrieved for future use. The down side is that people who have experienced a situation are often so immersed in the details they fail to share everything without some prompting from an outsider. An option to facilitate this is to have someone interview the person to ensure all the information is gathered.

When implementing storytelling it is important to remember that this is not an opportunity to identify who is to blame in a situation. For storytelling to be successful, employees must feel comfortable sharing both things that went well and things that could be done differently. Similarly, employees must be prepared to hear suggestions for improving outcomes from others.

The information gained from storytelling can, and should, be used to make changes to standard processes as appropriate. In this way, implicit knowledge can be incorporated into the explicit knowledge within an agency.

Knowledge Directory

Almost every organization has some mechanism to identify a person by name or job title but think how valuable it would be to identify employees by the knowledge an employee holds. This could include knowledge they gained through experience from your organizations as well as other jobs or even outside activities. For example, think about a supervisor who has received training with Six Sigma or a caseworker who speaks fluent Spanish. A quick survey or interview with an employee can quickly identify knowledge held by current employees. This same process can be completed as an employee joins your organization. Some talents or training can be assigned to an employee by virtue of their position. For example, an accountant would have knowledge of accounting principles. An employee’s “knowledge portfolio” can be expanded as they receive new training or their jobs change. To ensure this information is up-to- date, a knowledge audit can be incorporated into an employee’s annual performance review.

Electronic Bulletin Boards

If your agency’s employees are comfortable with technology and have access to computers on a regular basis, an internal electronic bulletin board can be used to allow employees to post questions and receive input from others in the organization. These questions and subsequent answers could be archived and made searchable for future situations. These boards are fairly easy to establish and can facilitate communication among groups that may work in different locations or on different shifts. The boards can be divided by topic or by group, whichever makes sense for your organization. If you have concerns that your employees will not access the boards on a regular basis, you can put a system in place in which employees within a certain group receive e-mail notification that a question has been posted and request that they review the bulletin board and provide input.

If you choose to implement a bulletin board be careful to ensure the technology does not overwhelm your employees or make the tool difficult to use. Your first impulse may be to implement the most complicated system with every bell and whistle available. Resist this inclination, however, and think about your population as you determine the best approach to take.

Wikis/Blogs

Wikis and Blogs are electronic mechanisms to post information which is accessible and, generally, searchable by others. These tools can provide employees with the opportunity to record their experiences, provide advice to other employees, or record information they have learned in a manner that can be accessed easily by others. As with all KM tools, be sure the technology you are using is appropriate for your audience.

Other Methods

The methods described above are broad categories of methods to capture implicit knowledge. These categories can include several variations and can be customized for the specific needs of your agency. Entire books and various articles have been written on methods for KM and can provide valuable information as you design your process. One thing to keep in mind as you evaluate ways to capture implicit knowledge is to remember that this type of knowledge can only be gained through experience and the method you use should provide an opportunity for employees to share their experiences in a way that benefits others within your agency.

Step 4: Process in place to review and update the information gathered

Now that you have documented all of the knowledge in your agency you may think your work is done. Unfortunately, it's not. Once the initial information is documented it can be easy to see the project as "complete" and move on to the next thing on your list. Knowledge, however, gets stale very fast. Six months, six weeks, or, in some cases, six days, after information is recorded it may become outdated or incorrect. In order to ensure your employees are not using outdated information a process must be put in place for the periodic review of information.

Explicit knowledge is fairly easy to review for accuracy and updates. By assigning employees the task of updating a few processes each and requiring that the information be reviewed at some set interval, for example yearly, the tasks of keeping explicit knowledge up-to-date can be made more manageable.

Documented, implicit knowledge may be harder to keep updated. Stories, bulletin boards, wikis, and blogs produce rich information but, because implicit knowledge is related to situations not covered by standard procedures, it may be more difficult to review and update. One option is to have a quarterly, or yearly, review of the information contained in these sources by the entire group of employees performing the relevant tasks. This will provide an opportunity to remove duplicate information, ensure everything is categorized correctly, and verify that the information is still correct. Another benefit is that it will ensure all employees hear the information contained in these sources even if they had not thought to use the resource before. This approach will also keep KM fresh in the minds of your employees.

Step 5: Pilot

Once you have decided on an approach you think will work for your agency it is a good idea to pilot it with a small group before rolling out your KM process to the entire population to work out any difficulties that may arise. This will allow you to correct any large issues, especially those related to technology, before rolling the program out to the entire agency.

You may find that it is necessary to take a different approach for groups within your organization. For example, the methods used by senior leadership may not work for frontline workers. Pilots among small subsets of various groups within your agency will identify any adjustments that need to be made based on the individual needs of the group.

In addition to giving you the opportunity to make changes to your process, piloting also gives you the chance to score quick "wins" which will help build momentum for the broader KM roll out. Be sure to identify these successes and publicize them. If difficulties arise during the pilot stage, discuss these as well, along with the changes implemented to address them. This will convey a sense of optimism toward the process.

Step 6: Measurement

Measuring the benefit of a KM process is difficult since it is hard to quantify what lost knowledge costs. This does not mean, however, that you should not measure aspects of the KM process.

First, while it is hard to quantify the benefits of a KM process, qualitative data can provide insight into how well a program is working. A simple survey, or small group meetings, allow you to ask employees if they find the information available valuable and sufficient and if they have noticed an improvement in their ability to do their job because of the knowledge resources available to them. Supervisors and managers can also monitor employees to see if the time for new employees to become full contributors is reduced.

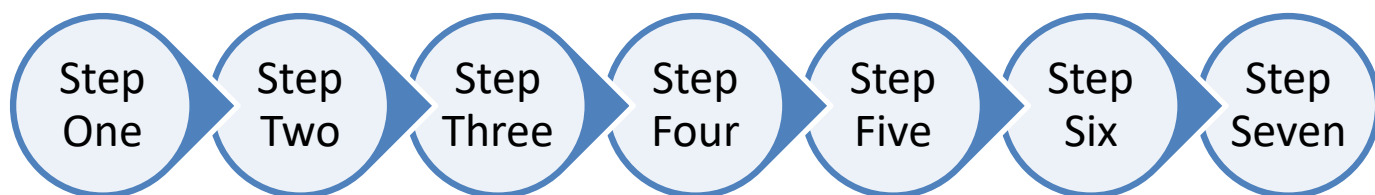
Measurements like the percentage of processes documented, participation rates in mentoring programs, and the number of times a resource is accessed can all be used to determine if your program is being used by your employees. It is important to remember that once a program is rolled out it can quickly be eclipsed by other competing priorities if efforts are not made to ensure employees stay focused on the importance of KM. In addition, monitoring the use of the program will quickly alert you to the fact that the program may not be working as intended.

Measurement of individual involvement using Employee Performance Reviews is important to hold ALL employees accountable for their involvement in KM. By including job duties related to KM you can emphasize that this is considered part of the duties of a person's position and formally document an employee's contributions.

Keep in mind, that in a world of constantly changing priorities and challenges, if something is not monitored it will quickly stop being done. Measurement, in whatever way you decide is best for your agency, will help ensure that KM remains a priority. Measuring the success of your program periodically will also indicate if improvements to the program need to be made.

Step 7: Monitor workforce changes and changes to processes to identify new areas of critical knowledge

If you have limited your KM efforts to certain populations within your agency based on workforce information or identification of critical process within your agency, be sure to monitor these characteristics to ensure the factors which led you to identify these populations still exist. If changes to your workforce or processes warrant a different focus for KM efforts, be sure to adjust your process as necessary. The frequency of this review will vary depending on the size of your organization (these changes are often obvious in small agencies but can easily be hidden in large agencies) and other factors impacting the mission of your agency.



Other Potential Benefits

Now that you have successfully implemented your KM process you may wonder if there are benefits beyond sharing knowledge within your agency. Below are a few examples of the benefits you can experience:

Process Improvement

It is nearly impossible to improve a process if you have not documented the current process. Documenting explicit knowledge allows for an easy review of the current process and examination for possible improvements. A review of implicit knowledge may provide ideas for process improvements while also identifying possible difficulties that can be addressed through process changes. For example, if a mentor advises a mentee on a process work-around this may indicate the process itself is broken and needs to be changed.

Standardization

By documenting procedures and capturing best practices you can increase consistency and standardization within your agency.

Shared Best Practices

Think about the processes you perform in your agency which are performed in other agencies. The mission of agencies may be different, but the processes used are often the same. At quick glance these agencies may seem to have little in common. A closer look, however, would reveal that both agencies share some similar process outcomes and if the processes of both were well documented, each agency may be able to gain process improvement ideas from the other.

Think about it on a more global basis. Every agency has core support functions like finance, human resources, and procurement. If each agency could easily review the processes of other agencies it would be possible for an agency to incorporate positive aspects of other agencies' processes into its own.

Information Sharing

Agencies often find it necessary to provide information on the processes used and tasks completed to individuals outside of the organization, for example legislators or regulatory agencies. Having this information documented will make it much easier to provide information when requested.

Agency Leadership Changes

With changes in agency leadership, it may be necessary to quickly provide information regarding the functions performed by agency employees to someone charged with making decisions regarding the direction of any agency. Having the knowledge within your agency documented and available will reduce the time necessary for new leadership to learn about agency functions.

Additional Assistance

The Division of State Human Resources can provide assistance in the design of a KM process for your agency. For information regarding available services, please contact your human resources consultant.

Resources

The resources below were used in the creation of this guide:

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