

Indicators and the impact of Knowledge Management

“Indicators are quantitative or qualitative measures that enable you to assess the degree to which project outputs and impact have been achieved”¹. “

“Discussions found that knowledge practitioners are faced with multiple challenges when measuring the impact of KM work and proving that this work has led to changes in knowledge, attitudes, policy, practice and action.

Drivers for indicators can be split into two main groups: external and internal.

External indicators focus upon accountability to funders, and demonstrating value for money, while **internal** indicators are used to monitor and improve effectiveness, learn what works and what does not, and to justify the investment of knowledge work relative to other activities.

It can be a complicated and long causal pathway from knowledge management or knowledge brokering to reducing poverty or tackling inequality. It is important that we are able to demonstrate our contribution to intermediate outcomes, and indicators can play a vital part in establishing this link. Measuring changes relating to knowledge sharing is particularly difficult due to the intangible nature of knowledge. However, we can more easily measure:

- The existence of knowledge objects (captured information)
- The existence of 'things' used to manage, use and broker knowledge
- Perceptions of the success of knowledge activities (for example through qualitative methods such as interviews)

Indicators should be:

1. Robust (able to stand up to critique and interrogation)
2. Clear / explicit in intent and language
3. Contextualized (well suited to the context in which they are being used)
4. Meaningful (you have a reason for measuring it and the information is useful to you)
5. Quick and simple to measure
6. Useable (linked to accessible data we know how to find)
7. Valid (it measures what it claims)
8. Coherent (linked to the original problem and objectives/outcomes, and embedded within an overarching Theory of Change)
9. Used alongside other indicators for an indicator set or 'basket'
10. Durable: have longevity (being able to compare results over time)
11. Described in terms that are themselves defined
12. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound)²

¹ SMART toolkit for evaluating Information Projects, Products and Services, CTA/KIT/IICD, 2009
<http://publications.cta.int/en/publications/publication/1557/>

² “The use of Indicators for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Knowledge Management and Knowledge Brokering in International Development”, IDS, 2013. A very useful resource for thinking about KM impact assessment and M&E, quoted extensively in this document
<https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Knowledgeindicatorsworkshopreport8thMarch2013.pdf>

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1.1 Sample Indicators

Indicators for an online community of practice (CoP) or knowledge sharing forum

- # of members
- # of contributions (differentiated by content type, such as discussion, file, blog, wiki entry)
- # of views of different content types (discussion, file, blog, wiki entry, etc.)
- distribution of member participation (contributors who also comment vs. contributors without comments vs. email only members)
- # of responses per query/discussion
- average # of days before a discussion query receives its first response
- # of policy advisors who engage in discussions (who provide input to discussions based on their job description/terms of reference)
- # contributions of policy advisors
- # of inbound, outbound (reciprocated) connections of policy advisors and community members within the corporate social network
- #/% of conversations in a CoP that switch directions/take unexpected turns
- Y/N - was the primary target audience engaged in the set-up of the intervention
- Y/N - would target audience miss intervention if discontinued/not set up in the first place (as judged by supplier and target audience itself)
- # of one-to-one conversations you have had as a result of the portal
- Y/N - have you talked to someone you did not talk to before/would not have talked to without the community?
- Y/N - have you worked with anyone outside the portal that you met here?
- Y/N - Can you give an example for what the CoP enabled you to do?

Indicators for organizational development of knowledge management/sharing capacity (Indirect, qualitative indicators using perception surveys). % of staff who agree or strongly agree with:

- I feel encouraged to share knowledge with my colleagues
- I have the time and opportunity to impart and receive knowledge to/from other people
- I have shared knowledge with a colleague outside my immediate team an average of at least once a week
- Knowledge is an essential organizational resource
- My organization encourages me to seek knowledge from colleagues
- When I have knowledge needs, my organization designates a specialist to assist me
- I know precisely who in my organization has the specific knowledge to help me with my work
- I am able to find the knowledge I need quickly and easily
- When searching for knowledge within the organizational repository, the knowledge I find is of good quality and meets my requirements
- My organization's communities of practice improve the ease and efficiency of knowledge sharing
- It is as easy to share knowledge with colleagues working in other locations as it is with those working within the same location as me



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- I have confidence that outputs that I have developed with potential value for future projects, will be known about, locatable and used after I have left the organization
- Y/N - we have structures for team and project work that encourage people to bring forward experiences and insights from other settings to shape their work
- Y/N - we encourage multiple perspectives and different points of view to emerge