OPERATIONAL PLAN
2008-2012

Connecting people, working smarter and getting results

WORKING DRAFT (6/13/2008)
To be vetted by BTEC KM Subcommittee
Section 1: OVERVIEW

For more than four decades, USAID has been providing foreign assistance and humanitarian relief to the developing world. Throughout this period, the Agency has developed innovative ideas to assist a world in need. As a result, USAID is a recognized leader in development and has a wealth of knowledge relevant for future work in foreign assistance. The ability to tap into that development experience comes with a unique set of challenges. USAID must be able to readily identify, draw upon and learn from our expertise, capabilities, and networks.

The Strategic Management of Human Capital initiative under the President’s Management Agenda (PMA) requires that agencies utilize knowledge management systems as “…part of an effective strategy that will help create, capture and share knowledge and information that is relevant to the organization’s mission.” This is especially relevant for USAID with its thousands of implementing mechanisms that are continually created, on-going and ending.

Within the framework of the Global Development Commons (GDC), USAID is in a prominent position to promote continuous and real-time exchange, collaboration, partnership, and action among public and private donors, agencies, private enterprises, NGOs, host governments, and civil society. In order to most effectively do so, the full extent of the Agency’s own knowledge has to be made available in a way it can easily be shared in the Commons. The need to manage USAID’s knowledge to fulfill its increasingly visible role is clear.

Furthermore, knowledge management must play a prominent role on the in implementing the Development Leadership Initiative. USAID recognizes it must strengthen its overseas presence and capacity to effectively deliver U.S. foreign assistance. Because knowledge creation, capture, and sharing serve as basic precepts USAID’s development efforts, we must link what we do with what we need to know. Thus, the mission of the Knowledge Management (KM) plan is to meet the challenge of connecting people, working smarter and getting results.

This document lays out the operational plan for the USAID Knowledge Management Program over the next five years (2008-2012). In order to effectively implement this operational plan, it is recognized that a meaningful investment of capital planning funds will be necessary. This is especially important for Objective 1 were the foundation of knowledge management is set.
Section 2: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Knowledge Management comprises a range of practices used by organizations to identify, create, represent, and distribute knowledge. Knowledge Management programs are typically tied to organizational objectives such as improved performance, innovation, developmental processes, lessons learned and the general development of collaborative practices. Knowledge Management focuses on the management of knowledge as an asset and the development and cultivation of the channels through which knowledge, information and data flow.

A key distinction made in the field of knowledge management is the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is often subconscious, internalized, and the individual may or may not be aware of what he or she knows and how he or she accomplishes particular results. At the opposite end of the spectrum, explicit knowledge is the knowledge that the individual holds explicitly and consciously in mental focus, and may communicate to others. This can include documents, websites and databases. Simply put, tacit knowledge is what is in our heads, and explicit knowledge is what we have codified.

Most knowledge management strategies address three key elements—people, process and technology. The interrelationships among the key elements can be explained as follows:

1) People: The purposes of process and technology are to help people add value to the organization. No process or technology improvements are worthwhile unless they are utilized by people.
2) Process: A thorough understanding of current processes can lead to better technology and personnel decisions. Like anything that has been modified and enhanced over time, processes are probably less efficient than if the current state had been planned for in the beginning.
3) Technology: Technology decisions must be made with the people and process in mind. The wrong technology decision can have a boomerang effect of adding stress to the process and people components.
Section 3: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AT USAID

Throughout USAID, there are numerous knowledge management efforts currently underway. However, lacking the overall leadership and framework of a common Agency knowledge sharing strategy, individuals, missions, and bureaus have developed these ad-hoc solutions to address many pressing knowledge sharing needs often in isolation and without the benefit of integration into long term Agency solutions.

Although these innovative solutions are to be commended, the drawback with the many on-going activities is that we have no clear Agency-wide means to know and share what is already working, and to use these proven solutions in any extensible efforts when similar knowledge sharing needs arise. Furthermore, knowledge that is created around a USAID activity tends to remain with that activity—even when the activity ends. With that model, knowledge is not easily shared across activities or able to be aggregated within the Agency.

The USAID Knowledge Management operational plan seeks to synthesize and promote knowledge sharing activities and resources already in use, while laying a strong foundation on which to build a truly cross-cutting, Agency-wide Knowledge Management capability. To do this, the operational plan embodies three key concepts: "KM Governance," "Extended Enterprise," and the "Three Faces of USAID."

**KM Governance**

Recognizing the importance of collaboration in developing successful knowledge management efforts, as well as the value in leveraging existing knowledge sharing solutions throughout USAID, knowledge management seeks to promote guiding principles and best practices to integrate these efforts and ultimately provide improved solutions. Formed through a representative body of subject matter experts and stakeholders, KM Governance forms the fundamental working group(s) through which all knowledge management programs and efforts first seek alignment with Agency strategies. Working through this strategic alignment, the KM Governance group can then establish and promote fundamental information standards (i.e., taxonomy, controlled language, metadata definitions etc), capture and share best practices/approaches, and promote the adoption and use of working communities of practice/purpose within their respective organizational units and ultimately throughout USAID.

Figure 1: Role of KM Governance
Extended Enterprise

The concept of an “extended enterprise” recognizes that the knowledge we need to do our business is not just found among USAID employees, but extends into many areas – with federal partners, international donors, contractors and grantees, recipient countries, development organizations, and even among USAID’s retirees, to name a few. To access these many sources of knowledge requires that we recognize these different sources, and in turn provide unique solutions that are both culturally and contextually relevant for the knowledge that may be gained. This context-sensitive approach will also enhance local application of USAID knowledge for improved results and performance at the point of use.

Three Faces of USAID

As a frame of reference for the different knowledge sharing requirements within the Extended Enterprise, the knowledge management operational plan introduces the idea of the “Three Faces of USAID”. Knowledge capture and sharing by each face are critical in helping USAID accomplish its development objectives, and each views themselves differently, depending on which they represent. The faces of USAID are:
- **Operational**: Encompasses the administrative services, processes, and support functions of the Agency;
- **Strategic**: Found both within USAID/Washington and within each mission, this facet defines Agency policy, Bureau and country strategies and program plans; and
- **Technical**: Provides on-the-ground development and humanitarian assistance that involves partners who are crucial to knowledge generation, and who are an extension of the USAID enterprise.
Section 4: USAID KM RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The Knowledge Management Team in the Office of the Chief Information Officer has developed the following USAID Knowledge Management Results Framework. It has been reviewed by the Agency-wide Knowledge Management Reference Group who has also shared their “Needs, Wants and Gripes” related to Knowledge Management at USAID. This Results Framework will now be vetted with the BTEC Subcommittee on Knowledge Management for approval.

With the overall vision of “Connecting people, working smarter and getting results”, the USAID Knowledge Management Results Framework includes three objectives:

Objective 1 – Manage Agency records and documents electronically

The basic foundation of knowledge management at USAID is provided in this Strategic Objective. It lays out the systematic (or explicit) knowledge at USAID and the basis for sharing that information—both for internal information sharing needs as well as external reporting.

Objective 2 – Capture and manage institutional knowledge

USAID’s strength is in its people and a large part of USAID’s knowledge resides with them—the tacit knowledge. Being able to harness and share that knowledge—especially with new USAID staff joining through the Development Leadership Initiative is critical to ensuring that knowledge is not lost.

Objective 3 – Support the implementation of a Global Development Commons Portal

The knowledge that USAID has cultivated over decades of foreign assistance throughout the world should be shared to improve international development efforts worldwide. The Global Development Commons is the forum for this knowledge exchange, and USAID should contribute its own rich experience to it.

These objectives provide the foundation upon which a long-term, integrated knowledge management vision can be realized. The following diagram provides an overview of the USAID Knowledge Management Results Framework.
## Vision: Connecting people, working smarter and getting results

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**KEY:**
- Process-related task(s)
- People-related task(s)
- Technology-related task(s)
The remainder of this section describes in detail the intermediate results that make up the USAID Knowledge Management Results Framework. It describes major issue(s) at USAID that have been identified. The framework also acknowledges that there’s a process, people and technology component for each intermediate result. As a next step, a workplan will be developed laying out specific tasks, milestones, and resources for each of the intermediate results.

1.0 **Objective 1: Manage Agency records and documents electronically**

1.1 **Metadata/ Taxonomy/ Common Tables**
In order to establish the foundation of Knowledge Management, basic information about each piece of knowledge must be provided. This is the metadata—who’s doing what where and how. The taxonomy provides common terminology that can be consistently applied, and common tables ensure that values are consistent from system to system.

1.1.1 Issue USAID guidelines on the use of metadata and common tables
1.1.2 Determine USAID owners of metadata and common tables
1.1.3 Investigate technology tools for maintaining the USAID metadata and common tables

1.2 **Records Management**
The official files of USAID should be stored in a consistent manner for easier retrieval and use. Knowing what should be maintained and for how long is important for USAID to be able to retrieve this information when needed and to comply with National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) guidelines.

1.2.1 Update USAID records management process in ADS to support eDiscovery process
1.2.2 Conduct records management training and commit to ongoing staff education
1.2.3 Investigate technology tools to support records management

1.3 **Documents Management**
Much of USAID’s knowledge is trapped in individual e-mail InBoxes and file directories. Even public shared drives cannot often help individuals or groups find the information they need. Better document management practices should be implemented.

1.3.1 Develop and promote conventions for formal and informal documents
1.3.2 Conduct staff training on file and e-mail management practices
1.3.3 Propose technology tools to better search for and retrieve files and e-mails

2.0 Objective 2: Capture and manage institutional knowledge

2.1 Expertise Locator System
Much of USAID’s expertise rests in its personnel. Knowing how to locate experts in a particular field or country is key to benefiting from their experience in implementing development programs.

2.1.1 Promote the use of an expertise locator system to link incoming staff to existing expertise
2.1.2 Encourage USAID staff to utilize and contribute to the expertise locator system
2.1.3 Utilize technology tools to capture and search for USAID technical expertise

2.2 Digital Artifacts Repository
A repository of development experience is critical for being about to show what USAID has already accomplished in its development programs. Now, being able to expand on it to include all types of media should be a major focus.

2.2.1 Update policies and procedures to broaden the scope of what should be maintained in the DEC (e.g., photos, videos, databases)
2.2.2 Conduct USAID and partner training to ensure compliance with current Development Experience Clearinghouse policies
2.2.3 Investigate technology tools to accommodate more robust searches of DEC information

2.3 Collaboration Spaces
Collaborative software is used to help people involved in a common task achieve their goals. This software includes modules such as eLibrary, calendaring, text chat, and wiki to support the tasks. Many USAID groups could benefit from the utilization of collaboration spaces—especially in an Extranet environment where the extended enterprise can work together.

2.3.1 Develop processes and procedures for establishing collaboration spaces for USAID activities
2.3.2 Work with HR to effectively utilize collaboration spaces for incoming DLI staff
2.3.3 Select a technology tool to support collaboration spaces on the USAID Extranet

3.0 **Objective 3:** Support the implementation of a Global Development Commons Portal

3.1 **Agency-wide Portal**
In order to prepare USAID for the Global Development Commons, it must be able to identify and gather USAID-funded websites so that USAID-specific knowledge can be included.

3.1.1 Develop guidelines for USAID-funded websites in partnership with pillar and regional bureaus
3.1.2 Compile and maintain directories of USAID-funded websites and engage webmasters in a community of practice
3.1.3 Build an intellectual portal prototype to support the Global Development Commons

3.2 **Collaboration Tools**
Collaboration practices should be utilized to do the work of USAID. Through more efficient communications with our partners and stakeholders, the exchange of knowledge can better take place.

3.2.1 Encourage collaboration practices that engage the extended enterprise (including implementing partners and other USG agencies)
3.2.2 Engage USAID/W and select missions in the development and usage of USAID collaboration tools
3.2.3 Work with M/CIO to identify a suite of technology tools to support collaboration

3.3 **USAID Knowledge Management Best Practices**
Throughout all our knowledge management efforts, we should implement KM best practices. This will not only improve our own work but will show leadership throughout USAID and the U.S. Government.

3.3.1 Implement the USAID Knowledge Management Operational Plan and monitor results
3.3.2 Lead a USAID-wide reference group on knowledge management
3.3.3 Identify and publicize good knowledge management practices across USAID
Section 5: MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

With this operational plan, USAID is pursuing an aggressive course for improving its knowledge posture in order to successfully implement the Global Development Commons initiative. In the end, the true measurements of the plan’s successes are:

- Our ability to get answers to basic, factual questions from an authoritative source in a timely fashion measured in hours or at most days
- Our ability to investigate more complex research questions that require in-depth analysis in days or weeks
- Our capability to create a final and approved blueprint for a USAID strategic plan or technical strategy in a matter of months
- Our aptitude to work more efficient and with improved quality because we know where to obtain necessary information and/or from whom to seek an answer
- Our capacity to provide the knowledgeable workforce as stated in the PMA as expected long-term results

A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to map how creating, capturing and sharing knowledge link to one another to reach outcomes at multiple levels. The framework will focus on how knowledge creation and knowledge capture and knowledge sharing all contribute to effective development programs. Some aspects will also capture where stakeholder processes feed back into improving knowledge management practices.