

# Developing a Knowledge Management Maturity Assessment Instrument to Support Action Planning

*By Patrick Lambe*

I have always been cautious about using KM maturity assessments. The traditional instruments we have seen (and there are many) have several drawbacks attached. The drawbacks pertain to one of the main reasons why you would want to employ a maturity assessment in the first place.

KM maturity frameworks should provide a way of measuring the KM capabilities of an organisation and should be capable of doing three main things:

- They should give us an actionable view of KM capability levels in the organisation at the present time as well as give a sense of direction (meaning they should have diagnostic and formative qualities, to help direct action planning – what’s working, what’s not working, and what could be better).
- They should provide a consistent framework over time, and be capable of getting reliable responses across different respondents, so that progress can be measured against a baseline.
- If applied consistently across different organisations they can provide the ability to benchmark one’s KM capabilities and maturity levels with other, similar organisations.

The second criterion is relatively easy to achieve (although reliability of response over time might be an issue for very subjective assessments), the third one depends on the adoption rate for the underlying framework. But the first one is the most problematic.

There are six major problems we face in getting to an actionable, formative assessment around KM capabilities:

1. The problem of decontextualisation
2. The fragmentation problem
3. The problem of flattening out the organisational landscape
4. The respondent knowledge problem
5. The problem of observability
6. The problem of interoperability

## **The problem of decontextualisation**

A generic assessment instrument takes a very templated, formulaic approach to what is a very unique set of needs in any given organisation and so it tends to focus attention on generic steps and solutions that may not be appropriate to the context of a specific organisation at a given time. It tends to miss “outlier” activities that may be important to that organisation at that time. The generic “KM orthodoxy” about what often or usually works well may not be relevant to your organisation’s specific needs, here and now.

For example, a typical framework would stipulate the need for senior management awareness of the importance of KM and then buy-in. This is considered in many KM maturity frameworks to be an early stage KM maturity



level, upon which further maturity levels depend.

We have worked with organisations where senior management buy-in would have indicated as a positive in the assessment, but when it comes to intangible levels of support, the management culture of walking the talk is weak, yet not easily observable in a formal assessment. On the other side of that equation, we have seen organisations where senior buy-in was not present at the outset, but where solid KM progress was made in portions of the business, leading to the scaling up of support (and more progress) later on. The sequence was the “wrong” way round (according to the framework) – and the maturity reading would have been completely off. Getting the model wrong runs the risk of focusing your attention on the wrong things (it may be right for organisations in general but it’s not right for you, here and now).

KM maturity models tend to assume that some things must precede other things, and that you can identify indicators that typify each maturity stage. If the indicator is present you are at a given maturity level. The theory says you can progress up the maturity scale by making sure those indicators are in place. However, as we saw in the previous example, capabilities don’t necessarily follow the sequence prescribed in the maturity model. Different organisations have different KM capability development pathways and sequences.

Nor is progression necessarily smooth; as Nick Milton points out (Milton 2011), quite often you will see phase shifts in KM because a number of factors are suddenly working together. Milton believes that a change metaphor is much better than a maturity “growth” metaphor for KM.

It is very hard for a generic KM maturity framework to pick up these nuances in a formal assessment, and the sequence of stages in a KM journey varies widely across different organisations.

### **The fragmentation problem**

Another problem cited by Nick Milton, is that many maturity models assume that different KM enablers can mature at different rates. In fact, as he points out, KM capabilities are an outcome of different enablers working together. It’s the system-wide effects that provide the broader context for a KM capability (Milton 2014). Breaking out the individual elements and rating them separately confounds this. KM needs to be built up as a complete system, and then scaled out. It cannot be built as a series of moving parts assembled, measured and matured independently (Milton and Lambe 2016).

### **The problem of flattening out the organisational landscape**

The KM maturity landscape in large organisations tends to be uneven, with peaks and troughs – some parts have better KM capabilities than others. An organisation-wide maturity instrument tends to even these out and produce an averaged out assessment that is not representative of the ground realities in the organisation, or the peaks and troughs in the landscape.

This means that the overall KM assessment may not be representative of the ground realities in the different parts of the organisation. For example, we may have a department that has an extremely effective approach to managing and sharing high quality information, but is not very good at implementing learning processes. Another part of the organisation may be very good at sharing and



collaboration, but they use their technology very poorly. Not only will a flattened out assessment hide these specifics about what could be done to improve each, but the decontextualisation problem also means that we are not looking at whether a department *actually needs to do* the things it is not good at. If high reliability information sources are not required for them to perform effectively, why should they be forced to focus on that instead of something else, because the organisation as a whole thinks it's important?

On the other hand, trying to get a partitioned set of maturity assessments for the different parts of the organisation could be a complex and onerous exercise. For a formative and actionable assessment, the maturity assessment needs to be able to connect to specific things to be done in the organisation. A "flattened out" assessment will give "average" areas of focus that may not address specific KM needs in specific places in the organisation. A comprehensive knowledge audit comprising a range of diagnostics is a much better mechanism for differentiating between local KM needs, and enterprise-wide KM needs.

### **The respondent knowledge problem**

A third problem is that the respondents to a KM assessment don't always appreciate what many of the indicators in traditional KM assessments actually mean. If you have different respondents replying from different parts of the organisation, then it can be a challenge to check whether they are interpreting the indicators consistently. "Senior management support" may get a check mark from one person who has seen a set of meeting minutes expressing support, where another respondent will check whether senior managers actually practice what they preach, or whether they allocate resources and give the green light on process changes. An experienced knowledge manager will assess the effectiveness and use of communities of practice differently from somebody inexperienced in KM.

Respondents often have the task of completing an assessment that makes everybody look good, and while many KM maturity assessments ask for documentary evidence, documentation is often not enough to test the substance of the factor being measured. A great deal of important knowledge-use happens within and between persons, and is not directly captured in documentation or visible transactions. This also connects to the observability problem cited below.

If you have a single respondent responding for the whole organisation, they may not have sufficient in-depth knowledge of what happens on the ground across the different parts of the organisation to be able to give an accurate overall reading (and even if they can, we have the "flattening" problem mentioned above).

In short, respondents often don't know the detail of what they are assessing, nor of the significance of many of the indicators they are being required to check.

### **The problem of observability**

There are two main types of KM maturity assessment. One is a relatively simple assessment that helps knowledge managers to take a high level view of their organisation and make a general evaluation of where there might be gaps. The references below, from David Skyrme or David Griffiths, are examples (Skyrme 2007, Griffiths 2014). However, these assessments are so high level, that anyone with experience in KM would be aware of what to look for, even without them. They are most useful to people who are very new to KM, or as reflection "big



picture” pieces for experienced practitioners, and while they might guide attention and focus, they don’t yield much in the way of detailed actionable insight and evidence.

Then there are the very detailed ones, such as the APQC KM capability assessment, containing hundreds of questions to be completed in a spreadsheet. This is where a respondent will need to trawl for evidence on a very rigorous and comprehensive set of indicators. Stan Garfield (2011) gives a good overview of KM maturity models out there.

As stated above, the observability problem relates to the fact that a great deal of important knowledge-use happens within and between persons, and is not directly captured in documentation or visible transactions. A strictly evidence-based approach in inexperienced hands tends to produce an assessment that is skewed towards the visible knowledge activity in an organisation, and misses the less visible knowledge activity.

To be truly effective, an audit approach (conducted by an experienced KM practitioner and assessor) is going to be better at getting to the heart of what is really going on, because auditors are trained in looking under the hood at what is actually going on behind the documented evidence. This, of course, imposes an implementation cost. It also suggests that a broader knowledge audit might be a better way of getting actionable insight than a single-lens KM maturity assessment.

### **The problem of interoperability**

KM maturity assessments of the more extensive kind tend to be proprietary to the consulting firm that produced them. The underlying KM framework or model is not accessible to review unless you subscribe to the model for a specific application exercise. While this has a potential advantage in that the framework often comes with an experienced assessor or auditor, there are several downsides to working from a proprietary framework.

It means not only that the contextualization issues we mentioned above are not easily transparent to the customer of the assessment, but it also means that these assessments tend to stand apart from other knowledge audit or KM assessment activities. It is not always very easy to tie in the findings from a proprietary KM maturity assessment to the findings from other audit or assessment activities – for example, a inventory of knowledge assets, knowledge risks, knowledge gaps, knowledge flows, or an assessment of specific processes underpinning e.g. learning, innovation, collaboration, use of intranet.

### **Result: Caution**

For all these reasons, we have been very cautious about working with KM maturity assessments with clients, and we have advised our clients on the “health warnings” to consider when working with KM maturity assessments.

KM maturity assessments can be useful in some circumstances. For example, they can be useful to trace the maturity of specific KM initiatives such as a community of practice, where there is a great deal of data on the different stages that communities of practice go through, providing reliable predictors of maturity – far more stable and consistent data than we have for KM implementations in general.



We have also built customised maturity assessment frameworks for clients based on their KM strategy and roadmap – in that case, the maturity instrument is customised to track what the KM strategy and vision intends to achieve over a given period, and so overcomes the “one size fits all” contextualisation issue. However you still have to be careful about the “flattening out” effect where you might miss uneven levels of progress in different parts of the organisation.

In short, we have not been comfortable in recommending the use of a standalone maturity assessment at the start of a KM journey – we have always felt that a knowledge audit is much more effective at supporting a structured needs analysis and determination of goals and objectives. Maturity frameworks can sometimes be useful as part of a monitoring framework once the strategy is developed, but should be used with some caution.

### **A challenge from a client**

Earlier in 2017 we were challenged by a client to look again at our reservations about KM maturity assessment. They accepted the validity of the problems we cited, but they wanted a way to help their managers in different parts of the organisation to track their progress in KM implementation using a common assessment framework. The client was already implementing targeted knowledge audits across different business units, but they wanted a way for managers to be able to put the knowledge audit findings into a broader guiding framework.

Our client was already subscribed to a major commercial KM maturity assessment instrument, but they wanted something that was easier and less onerous to implement in a distributed and repeated way across the organisation. They wanted something that would connect with their other KM assessment activities, and they wanted a dashboard that would help managers track strengths, weaknesses and progress. They asked us if we were willing to see if we could find a way to address the challenges we had identified. We said we would give it a go.

This was the outline of what they wanted:

The **KM Maturity/Capability Framework** behind the assessment. This should:

- Be consistent with known good practice in KM practice and the KM research literature and other well known maturity and capability assessment frameworks such as APQC, MAKE Awards framework, etc;
- Support alignment with ISO management systems standard (there is an ISO KM standard in the development pipeline);
- Allow analysis and drill-down to detailed elements and support action planning.

The **Collection Instrument** that collects responses in a prescribed format. This should:

- Consist of a simple, easy to complete self-assessment questionnaire;
- Be capable of completion in a reasonable period of time (30 mins to 1 hour) by respondents from different parts of the organisation;
- Collect data in a way that allows analysis on multiple dimensions of interest.

The **Dashboard and Analytics module** that collects responses in a prescribed format. This should:



- Give the ability to users to view and interact from within the intranet and in combination with other KM diagnostic findings such as knowledge risks, pain points, culture issues, etc;
- Use a simple-to-understand scoring system to help managers see their current status;
- Give the ability to compare with other business units or groups of business units, or enterprise at large;
- Support roll-ups to division, group and enterprise level;
- Give the ability to drill down to detail and find action planning guidance.

### **Design principles**

We started by reviewing the challenges that many KM maturity assessments face, and developed a set of design principles around each, to mitigate their impact.

#### *1. The problem of decontextualisation*

One of the major causes of the decontextualisation problem is the assumption that all organisations must follow a prescribed sequence to implement KM. Within a typical KM maturity assessment survey, this is expressed as a set of indicators, each of which is assigned to a specific maturity level for the KM element or enabler they cover. If the indicators are marked as present, the framework calculates the maturity level accordingly. The designer of the instrument therefore determines what counts for a given maturity level even before the instrument arrives in the organisation. This is what we call a pre-coordinated approach.

In our design we decided to use a post-coordinated approach. Maturity levels are not determined and linked to indicators in advance. The indicators propose good KM practices, and ask the respondents to evaluate how those practices contribute towards business effectiveness in their context. In our collection instrument, respondents are asked to look at a series of indicators for a given KM activity area, and they are asked to assess the maturity level of that activity area for themselves and from the perspective of the business unit they represent. The maturity levels they make an assessment for, are:

- **Not Managed** = score 0 = We are not aware of it being consciously managed
- **Aware** = score 1 = We are aware of its significance and have an idea of how to work on it
- **Beginning** = score 2 = We are starting to work on it
- **Scaling** = score 3 = We are building this element into the way we work
- **Showing Results** = score 4 = We are starting to see value to the business from managing this element
- **Embedding** = score 5 = This element is fully embedded into the way we work, and is continually being refined to optimise our performance

What this means is that *the maturity assessment is made by the respondent* in relation to the business outcomes of the KM activity area being assessed, and not by the designer of the assessment instrument. We believe this is an empowering and participatory approach, handing the responsibility for evaluation to the managers who are responsible for how work is conducted in their organisation, by asking them to link knowledge activity to business outcomes. To avoid very crude scoring or the “migration to the middle” phenomenon, we do not use a Likert scale. In our online survey instrument, we use a sliding scale with 100 points





between the 0 to 5 markers, so that respondents can give a finely graded assessment on where they sit anywhere on the maturity scale.

**How we use information**

Is the quality and flow of information managed and optimised to support good decisions and efficient and effective working?  
(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup).

**1. Governance:**  
We want to know the extent that important information and key communication flows are consistently managed in support of the business.

Here are some indicators. Please mark on the sliding scale your overall assessment of the extent to which they are in place. You will find an explanation by placing your mouse over each point on the scale.

**Indicators**

- We have strong content governance - i.e. we have identified the critical information content for our team, we have identified the key use-cases for that content, and there are content management roles and responsibilities
- Sensitive information is classified and appropriately (but not excessively) protected
- We have strong communications governance - i.e. the different channels for communications are clearly defined, staff know how they should be used, and they are used appropriately
- We have mapped the critical information flows necessary for key activities (including cross-departmental flows)

Not Managed      Aware      Beginning      Scaling      Showing Results      Embedding

Some indicators are true or partially true. We are starting to work on this area.

*Illustration of the post-coordinated maturity assessment*

The second design principle was to separate the assessment survey by what we call “KM functions” – these are typical focus areas for KM that may vary in importance by business context. The KM functions are:

- How leadership and the strategy process are aligned with KM
- How information (explicit knowledge) is managed
- How tacit knowledge is shared, and how collaboration is practised
- How tacit knowledge that is critical to the organisation is protected, conserved and transferred
- How learning takes place
- How innovation and change are managed

Giving the ability to call out different KM functions allows a business unit to say that some KM functions are more important to its business than others, and to contextualise the assessment to their own needs.

The final contextualization piece is in how the survey is administered. Respondents respond from the perspective of their business unit. They are required against each activity area they assess, to review the indicators of what would be considered good practice for that area, and also indicate what their priority for improvement should be, captured as a comment to their maturity rating. When conducted in a group setting, this elicits a rich discussion on what improvements would be appropriate to their context. This sense of context and priority is captured and then available for review at the same time as the assessment scores are reviewed.

## *2. The fragmentation problem*

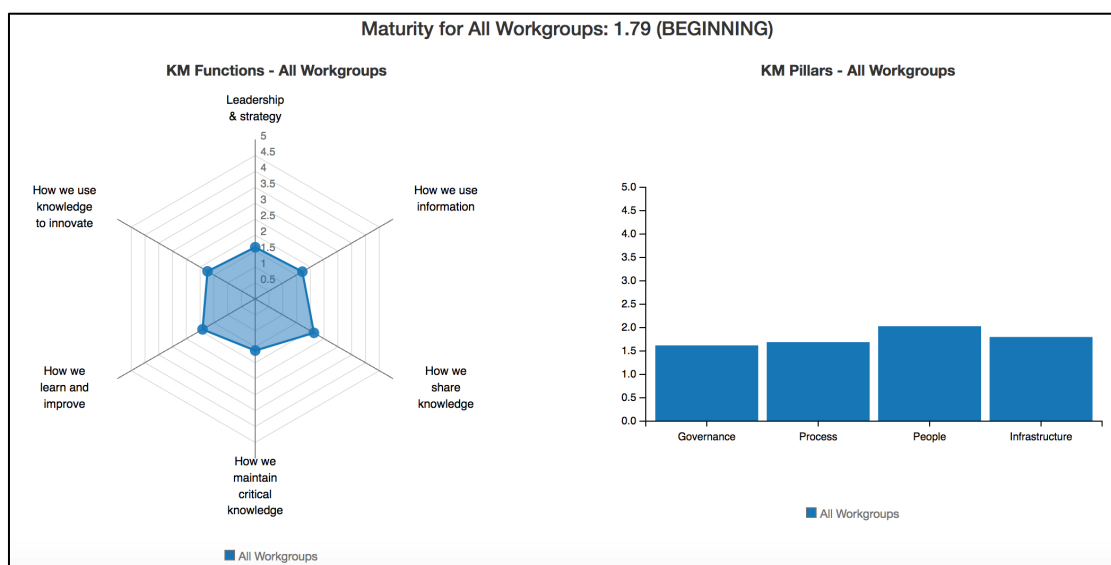
This problem relates to the need to consider KM as an ecosystem with interdependencies between the different enablers (people, process, governance, technology and environment).

In our design, each KM function area considers the indicators of good practice relating to each of four enablers, which we label “KM Pillars”. The KM pillars refer to the enablers that need to work together and be aligned, for KM as a whole to be effective. The pillars are:



- **Governance** – how the KM function under consideration is guided and directed
- **Process** – whether repeatable, stable processes exist for the KM function
- **People** – whether there are people in the right roles, with the right skills, resources and motivation to perform the processes
- **Infrastructure** – whether both technology and the physical environment enable and support the KM function being considered

This means that the dashboard can display two views of the maturity assessment: one by KM function, and one by KM pillars. In particular, this helps us to see whether attention to the four pillars is broadly aligned, or whether some pillars are getting less attention than others. This directs users' attention to areas that can be improved to maintain the overall balance of KM effort, and hence the effectiveness of KM as a whole.



*Illustration of two dimensions of view: by KM Function and by KM Pillar*

### *3. The problem of flattening out the organisational landscape*

We designed the survey to be answered at department level. So while the default view of the maturity dashboard shows an averaged out maturity rating, any viewer can select individual business units (or groups of business units) and see their rating. They can also compare their business units with the organisation as a whole, so that similarities and differences can be identified. Maturity assessments can be rolled up and compared easily. This provides a clear way of seeing broad patterns as well as detailed differences in capability, need and priority.

### *4. The respondent knowledge problem*

The first method of addressing respondent knowledge was to de-jargonise the KM indicators, so that mid-level managers who don't know a lot about knowledge management could give meaningful responses. We ran the survey through two cycles of pilots with candidate respondents to achieve this, making significant changes to the language we used along the way.

Secondly, to address the quality of the evidence collected, we believe the survey





response is best conducted as a facilitated activity within a broader knowledge audit exercise (although it can be conducted independently of that). We ask for 2-3 knowledgeable representatives of each business unit to complete the assessment together. These same representatives are also responding to the other knowledge audit activities, if the broader knowledge audit is being conducted.

The representatives from each business unit have to discuss their shared assessment, and they identify their priorities together. While there is still an element of subjective evaluation to this, it is a product of a discussion and sensemaking exercise, where a shared position by qualified people is reached, in a relatively short period of time. In our pilots, we found that the survey could be completed in 20-35 minutes.

We also checked the pilot responses for consistency against knowledge audit findings from knowledge maps and pain points analysis conducted by the same groups prior to the KM maturity assessment exercise. We found that the key areas assessed as relative weaknesses in the maturity assessment were broadly consistent with findings on major gaps and risks identified in the knowledge audit exercise, even though the people involved in the pilot were not always the same.

#### *5. The problem of observability*

The survey assessment depends upon a group-based evaluation of key KM function areas. Some of these areas are more directly observable than others. While documentation might well be required and gathered to support the assessments (and in a formal audit or an award framework this might be required), the assessment does not depend solely on documentary evidence, but the evaluation of qualified personnel. This allows for some insight into the less directly observable knowledge-related activities (such as willingness to help and share knowledge).

#### *6. The problem of interoperability*

We approached this challenge in four ways.

- a) First, we undertook desk research, to review a range of KM maturity, KM assessment and KM capability frameworks. The full list is given in the references and resources section of this paper. We were particularly interested in examining assessments that have a robust, publicly accessible, development process and public consultation process – for example, the Asian Productivity Organisation's KM Framework (APO 2009), the KM section of the Singapore Business Excellence Framework (SPRING Singapore 2015), and the emerging ISO KM standard. While the ISO KM standard is not yet released for public consultation at the time of writing, it follows the structure of the ISO Management Systems Standards, and so provides a robust framework for considering what should be included or excluded in a KM framework that will meet ISO requirements (ISO/IEC 2015). We were also interested in the APQC (n.d.) maturity assessment framework since it is very comprehensive, is widely deployed and is used for benchmarking. We used the desk research, along with our design principles, to draft a first version of the assessment instrument. This alignment with the broader literature is very important, since it means that our assessment instrument can help provide input for more formal KM assessments such as an ISO certification or a MAKE Award submission.



- b) Our second step was to submit our draft framework to peer review. We are grateful for the detailed feedback and comments made by our two peer reviewers, Nick Milton of Knoco Ltd., and Paul Corney of knowledge et al, both of whom have developed their own KM assessment instruments, both of whom have been deeply involved in the development of the emerging ISO KM standard, and both of whom are highly experienced in conducting KM assessments and knowledge audits for a wide range of organisations. Knoco Ltd. also runs a regular global KM implementation survey, and has a large dataset of results that they have used for benchmarking purposes (Milton and Lambe 2016). Their feedback was extremely helpful in modifying the first draft of our framework and making it more robust and comprehensive, although they do not necessarily agree with all of the decisions we took.
- c) Our third step was to align the KM maturity assessment with other knowledge mapping and diagnostics techniques and tools that we use within a knowledge audit process. For example, we have a tool that helps organisations map their knowledge assets associated with key activities, and then captures knowledge risks, knowledge gaps, and knowledge accessibility issues associated with those assets (Aithin Software 2017). When a KM maturity assessment surfaces improvement priorities associated with the KM functions of Information Management, Knowledge Sharing, and Critical Knowledge, the knowledge maps can be consulted to identify which specific knowledge assets need to be addressed. We have a diagnostic tool for identifying common KM pain points in an organisation around Coordination, Organisational Memory and Learning. This can help to understand the specific contexts and problems associated with a low maturity assessment on the KM functions of Information Management, Knowledge Sharing, Critical Knowledge, Learning and Improvement, and Innovation and Change. We have a diagnostic tool for identifying common cultural behaviours around knowledge sharing and use. This can provide specific insights into the underlying cultural issues and opportunities around the KM functions of Leadership and Strategy, Knowledge Sharing, Learning, and Innovation and Change, as well as the change management issues to be addressed in making KM improvements. While the KM maturity assessment can be implemented on its own, when it is conducted together with a variety of audit techniques such as those listed above, we have a variety of lenses that adds rich context and detail to make the resulting action planning much more targeted and specific. Our initial implementation of the KM maturity assessment tool provides an integrated set of dashboards for each audit instrument, making it much easier to build action plans around the issues identified in the assessment. But again, the assessment instrument is not dependent on these specific tools, and can be used in conjunction with other tools – for example, an intranet maturity assessment.
- d) Our final step was to agree with our client that we would develop the KM assessment framework as a non-proprietary open source instrument, and make it openly available for scrutiny, use and adaptation. In this way, potential users will be able to examine the content of the framework, evaluate its applicability to their own context, see how they can use it in combination with other KM diagnostic and audit methodologies, scrutinise the extent to which it is aligned with known good practice in KM, and figure out useful ways of implementing it in their own organisation. This



article is an expression of this measure, and the Appendix below contains the full KM maturity assessment instrument we developed. If you use it, we welcome feedback on how it is used.



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## Appendix: A Post-Coordinated KM Maturity Assessment

This assessment is in six sections, each section covering a distinct KM function. The KM functions are:

- Leadership and strategy
- How we use information
- How we share knowledge
- How we maintain critical knowledge
- How we learn and improve
- How we use knowledge to innovate and change

Each KM function has four numbered questions. The numbered questions refer to each of the enablers of Governance, Process, People and Infrastructure. For each numbered question, respondents are asked to reflect on, and discuss, the degree to which the business unit they represent are acting on, and benefiting from a set of four indicators associated with the question. They are then asked to give a maturity rating at any point on a sliding scale with the following markers:

- **Not Managed** = score 0 = We are not aware of it being consciously managed
- **Aware** = score 1 = We are aware of its significance and have an idea of how to work on it
- **Beginning** = score 2 = Some indicators are true or partially true. We are starting to work on it
- **Scaling** = score 3 = Several indicators are true. We are building these indicators into the way we work
- **Showing Results** = score 4 = Indicators are mostly true and we are starting to see value to the business from managing this element
- **Embedding** = score 5 = True. This element is fully embedded into the way we work, and is continually being refined to optimise our performance

Respondents are also required to identify where they think their improvement priorities should be for each question.





## KM Function: Leadership and Strategy

Does our leadership and the planning cycle promote the effective use of knowledge in support of business outcomes?

*(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup).*

### 1. Governance:

*We'd like to know your view on how leadership directs and guides information and knowledge management in support of the business.*

#### Indicators

- We have defined the focus and scope of knowledge management (KM), based on an assessment of the current knowledge resources we have, and an assessment of our knowledge needs
- There are policies in place to guide KM, and staff are aware of the contents of those policies
- We have a KM strategy aligned with the business strategy, and the results and outcomes of KM are measured and reported
- There are KM-related roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and they are appropriately resourced

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### 2. Process:

*We'd like to know the extent to which you have processes through which KM goals are defined, communicated and resourced.*

#### Indicators

- We plan KM activities as a regular part of business and work planning
- Our leadership communicates the importance, objectives and expected outcomes of KM in their words and actions
- New knowledge and lessons learnt are built into business rules and business processes
- Training is provided based on business objectives as well as ad hoc needs

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### 3. People:

*To what extent does KM planning involve staff in your workgroup and other relevant stakeholders, and do staff have the right competencies to implement the plans?*



### **Indicators**

- People affected by KM plans are consulted on what their needs are, and they are kept informed of KM plans and activities
- People with KM responsibilities have the right competencies
- Staff are able to identify and access training and learning opportunities related to the knowledge needs of their role
- New staff are hired based on the current knowledge and skills needs of your workgroup

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **4. Infrastructure:**

*To what extent does leadership make sure that technology, tools and physical working environment support KM goals?*

### **Indicators**

- In deciding to buy new technology, the need to transfer and integrate information across platforms is considered
- In deciding to buy new technology, the need to protect critical information and knowledge is considered
- In leadership decisions about the use of office space, KM and collaboration needs are taken into account
- We use a standards-based approach to support the transfer and integration of information across platforms

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)



## KM Function: How we use information

Is the quality and flow of information managed and optimised to support good decisions and efficient and effective working?

*(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup).*

### **Governance:**

*We want to know the extent that important information and key communication flows are consistently managed in support of the business.*

### **Indicators**

- We have strong content governance - i.e. we have identified the critical information content for our team, we have identified the key use-cases for that content, and there are content management roles and responsibilities
- Sensitive information is classified and appropriately (but not excessively) protected
- We have strong communications governance - i.e. the different channels for communications are clearly defined, staff know how they should be used, and they are used appropriately
- We have mapped the critical information flows necessary for key activities (including cross-departmental flows)

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **2. Process:**

*We want to know the extent to which your workgroup has processes for identifying and managing critical information through its lifecycle and ensuring its quality and currency.*

### **Indicators**

- We regularly review the efficiency and effectiveness of our critical information flows
- Barriers to critical information flows are regularly identified and removed
- We have strong quality management for critical information content - i.e. it is managed, measured and reviewed for consistency, reliability, currency and accuracy through its entire lifecycle
- We have processes to ensure that content is written so it can be used easily by the people who need to use it



From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **3. People:**

*In relation to information management, to what extent does your workgroup ensure that user needs are considered, and do staff feel that they are able to manage critical information for the benefit of all users?*

#### **Indicators**

- We maintain use-cases to understand the needs of the people who use the information we produce
- We understand the broader business uses beyond our team for the critical information content we create and manage
- We have a culture of sharing information when it is requested (including across department boundaries), as long as it does not compromise sensitive information
- Staff are trained in the common information systems and processes they are expected to use

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **4. Infrastructure:**

*To what extent do you feel that the technology platforms used by your workgroup are designed and optimised to ensure that critical information can be discovered and accessed by the relevant users, wherever they might be?*

#### **Indicators**

- Critical information content is managed for easy access - i.e. it is on common platforms and it is described and managed to common standards
- Search engines and interfaces are tuned and maintained to support the search and discovery needs of staff
- Smart technology is used to assist the human effort in creating, describing and managing content
- Our technology platforms are implemented to bring related content and communications together, not scatter them

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)



## KM Function: How we share knowledge

Are staff helped to become aware of the knowledge that exists in the organisation, can they build their own knowledge, and can they seek help from others to solve problems?

*(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup).*

### **1. Governance:**

*We'd like to understand how your organisation ensures that staff share their knowledge for the benefit of the business as a whole.*

#### **Indicators**

- Knowledge sharing is recognised, explicitly or implicitly, as a corporate value
- We have a policy that guides staff on the need to share knowledge, balanced with the need to protect sensitive information
- Managers and leaders encourage, model and resource knowledge sharing practices, including across department boundaries
- Benefits from knowledge sharing activities are measured, recorded and reported

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **2. Process:**

*Do we have processes that enable staff to identify, access and share knowledge resources that will help them in their work?*

#### **Indicators**

- Staff onboarding processes include orientation to the knowledge and information sharing policies, platforms and processes
- We have processes to help teams and units that need to coordinate or collaborate, to become familiar with each other
- There are defined processes and activities for sharing knowledge beyond our team
- Our recognition and reward processes promote knowledge sharing - e.g. we recognise and motivate knowledge sharing, and we remove processes that incentivise knowledge hoarding

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)



### **3. People:**

*To what extent do we help new staff come up to speed quickly, and make sure that all staff have the competencies to share, and are motivated to do so?*

#### **Indicators**

- Colleagues help new staff come up to speed quickly in their jobs
- We have a culture of encouraging question-asking and responding helpfully to questions when asked
- We have the competencies we need to support knowledge sharing - e.g. facilitating knowledge sharing events, capturing knowledge, and designing knowledge transfer processes
- Staff appraisal and performance review takes knowledge sharing activity into account

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **4. Infrastructure:**

*To what extent are our technology platforms and work environments designed and optimised to support sharing, collaboration, and reuse of shared knowledge?*

#### **Indicators**

- Technology platforms, including tools for remote working, support formal and informal collaboration and sharing
- Physical workspaces and meeting spaces have features that support knowledge sharing and knowledge capture
- Knowledge shared via common technology platforms is tagged appropriately according to topic, so that it can be discovered and reused by others in the future
- Technology platforms can measure and report activities and trends in knowledge sharing via those platforms

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)





## KM Function: How we maintain critical knowledge

Does the organisation make sure it has continuing access to the knowledge that is critical to its business, especially the knowledge held in the skills and experience of its people (tacit knowledge), and does the organisation manage its risks of knowledge loss when people leave?

*(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup).*

### **1. Governance:**

*We'd like to know the extent to which leadership makes sure that the risk of critical knowledge loss is identified, monitored and mitigated.*

#### **Indicators**

- A register of critical knowledge areas, knowledge risks and knowledge gaps is compiled and regularly maintained
- Critical knowledge areas have staff appointed with responsibility for maintaining those knowledge areas
- Leadership directs and provides resources for critical knowledge transfer
- We monitor our progress in mitigating critical knowledge risks

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **2. Process:**

*We'd like to know whether you have processes through which knowledge critical to the business is identified and monitored, and through which risks are identified and mitigated.*

#### **Indicators**

- There are processes to support critical knowledge transfer - i.e. we identify and engage holders of critical knowledge as well as their designated successors
- There are processes to prioritise and then mitigate knowledge risks and knowledge gaps
- There are processes to capture and record the rationales of key decisions and policies so that future decision-makers will have the full context of those decisions and policies when they review them



- There are regular processes for knowledgeable and experienced staff to share their knowledge

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **3. People:**

*Have you identified the staff who hold critical knowledge, and staff who can be their successors, and are they supported and motivated to ensure effective knowledge transfer?*

#### **Indicators**

- We use knowledge sharing communities or networks to transfer and preserve critical knowledge
- People who are new in specialist roles can get access to the expertise and advice they need to help them get up to speed quickly
- The staff who are the designated successors or backups for the holders of critical knowledge, also participate in knowledge capture and transfer activities
- Staff are encouraged to develop their knowledge and experience in the critical knowledge areas important to us

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **4. Infrastructure:**

*Do technology platforms support finding and getting access to the critical knowledge that is embedded in the skills and experience of people, at the points in work processes where that knowledge is needed?*

#### **Indicators**

- Search tools help staff to find any critical knowledge, whether it is held in people or in documents, and the systems help staff get access to that knowledge
- Technology platforms are organised to support the discovery of resources, discussions, as well as question-asking and answering around critical knowledge areas
- Technology tools help staff to gain access to the specialist advice they need at critical or challenging points in a process
- There is a dashboard showing the organisation's critical knowledge areas, and identifying the staff who hold that knowledge as well as their designated successors, so that managers can track how critical knowledge is provided for

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)





## KM Function: How we learn and improve

Does the organisation ensure that lessons from both mistakes and successes are consistently evaluated, applied, shared and re-used?

*(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup).*

### **1. Governance:**

*We'd like to know the extent to which leadership ensures that learning and improvement are built into the way work is done.*

#### **Indicators**

- We have a policy that clearly spells out the need for continuous improvement through learning lessons and application of lessons learnt
- Managers and leaders encourage, demonstrate and provide resources for lesson learning processes and application of lessons
- Benefits from lesson learning activities are measured, recorded and reported
- There are designated roles with responsibility to collect and manage lessons in a systematic way, and to maximise the application and reuse of lessons

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **2. Process:**

*We'd like to know whether you have processes through which lessons are regularly identified, captured, shared and applied to make improvements.*

#### **Indicators**

- We have a comprehensive lesson learning system - i.e. we capture lessons after major events, activities or challenges, we identify follow-up actions and communicate them to potential beneficiaries, and we have processes to locate and review prior knowledge and lessons before major activities or projects
- Policies, procedures, guidelines and other performance aids are produced or modified based on lessons identified, and training programmes use lessons learnt
- Learning from customers and partners is channeled to the relevant stakeholders in our organisation and they apply that learning
- There are processes for learning from the practices of similar or related organisations



From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **3. People:**

*Are staff motivated and supported to participate in team learning and personal learning activities?*

#### **Indicators**

- We have a culture that explores both positive and negative lessons to be learnt, without finger-pointing or defensive behaviours
- There are staff who are trained in facilitating lessons gathering activities, and who ensure that the findings are productively used
- Staff are encouraged to propose improvements in the way work is done, and they contribute to improved practices
- Staff participation and engagement in training and learning events is high

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **4. Infrastructure:**

*What is the extent to which technology platforms enable the capture and discovery of lessons, and do meeting spaces have tools to support instant lesson capture?*

#### **Indicators**

- Lessons captured are tagged to critical knowledge areas and key work activities, and they are proactively pushed to people and functions associated with those areas and activities
- When users search for information on specific topics, lessons can be retrieved easily together with other related knowledge resources
- It is easy for customer-facing and non-customer-facing departments to collaborate using our technology platforms, on matters that impact the customer
- Physical and digital meeting spaces are equipped to capture lessons easily

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)



## KM Function: How we use knowledge to support innovation and change

Do we use knowledge to create new products and services and change our way of working? Do we use knowledge management to implement changes effectively?

*(Please respond to the questions below from the perspective of your workgroup)*

### **1. Governance:**

*We'd like to know about the extent to which leadership ensures that new knowledge that is necessary for the business is acquired or created, and that obsolete knowledge is deprecated.*

#### **Indicators**

- Leadership regularly reviews its knowledge management strategy, to identify any new knowledge that needs to be developed or acquired, to support the business strategy; leadership provides resources for the acquisition, development and application of this new knowledge
- We have a policy that gives clear direction on how obsolete knowledge and practices should be deprecated or removed, so that it doesn't interfere with current needs
- The business strategy is informed by new knowledge and learning
- Leadership measures, reviews and guides our innovation focus and tracks the way we implement the necessary changes in process, people and technology

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **2. Process:**

*Do we have processes through which new knowledge is acquired or developed, and through which change management is implemented?*

#### **Indicators**

- There are processes to identify emerging trends in the external environment, and the knowledge needs that result from those trends
- There are processes for new knowledge development or acquisition e.g. hiring, skills development, research and development
- Lessons are analysed for their broader implications about trends in the environment and any emerging opportunities for innovation





- There are change management processes to ensure that the knowledge of our people is kept refreshed to meet new business needs

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **3. People:**

*What is the extent to which staff are motivated and supported to innovate, embrace change and develop new competencies?*

#### **Indicators**

- Staff are encouraged to contribute innovative ideas in support of business objectives, and successful implementation is celebrated
- Staff have safe spaces in which to experiment, and failures are taken as learning opportunities
- Staff are helped to develop new skills and competencies when old practices are deprecated or removed
- There are staff who are trained in facilitating change, or who play roles as change agents in their workgroups

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

### **4. Infrastructure:**

*Do our technology platforms, tools and physical workspaces support innovation and change?*

#### **Indicators**

- There are physical spaces and tools that encourage generation of new ideas, creative thinking and collaboration
- Technology platforms are adaptive and can be reconfigured to support new working practices
- Technology platforms help staff to collaborate and adjust how they interact with each other when new working practices are introduced
- When new technology is acquired, we are able to integrate knowledge resources and processes that are still relevant

From the indicators, what is the most important improvement you can make?  
(Response required)

