



# THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT INDEX

A tool to assess organizational practice of  
and strengthen capacity in knowledge  
management for global health



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## Introduction

The Knowledge Management Index (KM Index) is an assessment tool, developed by The Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project, to examine an organization or project's use of KM practices, identify opportunities for improvement and, map out an action plan to strengthen the KM capacity. The KM Index measures the capacity in four fundamental KM practice areas: 1) organizational structure (KM vision and strategy), 2) learning opportunities (professional development), 3) internal KM culture (seeking out and sharing knowledge), and 4) KM for global health (effort to advance global health agenda).

## Purpose

Knowledge management (KM) is an evidence-based approach that ensures health professionals have the right knowledge at the right time to positively affect health outcomes. Factors such as an organization's culture and capacity can facilitate or discourage the implementation and/or continued practice of KM processes at various levels.<sup>1</sup> Organizations that support KM emphasize the importance of knowledge sharing at both the personal and organizational levels.<sup>2</sup> As every organization has different KM needs, each organization must consider how context/local realities impact capacity strengthening and incorporate those factors into how they design and implement KM activities.

However, KM practitioners in global health and development often face challenges in assessing and strengthening KM capacity and culture. While each organization is unique, certain characteristics can be measured to assess an organization's general support of KM as well as its ability to take action to strengthen its KM culture and increase its KM capacity. To that end, the KM Index was developed to help organizations assess their health information needs, implementation of KM, and capacity for KM, in a collaborative manner in order to strengthen an organization's KM capacity within the context of organizational needs and capabilities.

## Objectives

The KM Index was designed with three objectives:

1. To identify the existing and potential capacity to implement KM
2. To identify potential opportunities for improvement in the implementation of KM
3. To develop an organizational action plan to strengthen KM capacity

## When Should This Tool Be Used?

The KM Index should be used as a baseline assessment to inform the creation of project activities meant to enhance KM capacity, and as an endline assessment to assess changes in KM capacity and implementation of KM initiatives over time. If desired, and resources allow, the KM Index may also be used as a midterm assessment to gauge progress and inform potential course corrections.

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<sup>1</sup> Frost, A. (2010). KMT: An educational KM site. Retrieved from <http://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/>.

<sup>2</sup> Collison, C., & Parcell, G. (2004). *Learning to fly: Practical knowledge management from leading and learning organizations*. Chichester, West Sussex: Capstone.

## Components of the Knowledge Management Index

The KM Index includes four domains: 1) organizational structure, 2) learning opportunities, 3) internal KM culture, and 4) KM for global health. A series of key KM elements accompany each domain.

Domain	Definition	Example of Elements
1. Organizational Structure	Refers to the organization's use of strategies and resources to plan and manage KM	Common definition/understanding of KM, KM strategy, KM staff, and KM budget
2. Learning Opportunities	Relates to staff exposure to continuing professional development and training to strengthen existing skills and build new skills/knowledge	Staff orientation, KM-focused training (internal or external), and conferences/meetings
3. Internal KM Culture	Refers to the environment in which staff members are encouraged to share their knowledge with others and seek out new ideas/approaches	Information-seeking behavior, identified collection of best practices, incentives, database, and staff engagement
4. KM for Global Health	Relates to the organization's approach to using KM to support health professionals and advance the global health agenda	Specific health focus, use of up-to-date/relevant guidance, and KM for external project audience

## Understanding the Knowledge Management Index

The KM Index uses both qualitative and quantitative data to measure the KM capacity of an organization. The Index is meant to be implemented by a facilitator through focus group discussions with various levels of staff at the organization. The findings from the KM Index can be used to inform the development of activities meant to enhance KM and/or be used to measure changes in KM capacity and KM activities over time. The quantitative data is tallied from the number of KM elements an organization is practicing—each KM domain has a set number of KM elements—resulting in the “Knowledge Management Index Number.”

KM Element	Number of KM Elements
1. Organizational Structure	7
2. Learning Opportunities	5
3. Internal KM Culture	10
4. KM for Global Health	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

In the KM Index, each KM element is posed as an open-ended question. Based on the responses to these open-ended questions, the facilitator determines how well a given KM element is being practiced and suggests potential areas for improvement. If an organization is not currently using a KM element, the facilitator will note that the organization may want to consider practicing it, depending on the organization’s needs.

## Computing the Knowledge Management Index Score

After the focus group discussions are complete, the facilitator compiles and analyzes the findings for common themes and issues. Based on the analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions, the facilitator will score each KM element as either 0 or 1. A score of a 0 is given to organizations that are not practicing the KM element or that are practicing it but not in a systematic way. A score of 1 is given when an organization is systematically practicing the KM element. At the end of each domain, the facilitator will tally the KM elements that are currently being practiced—the KM elements that received a score of 1—under that domain. This score is the KM Index Number for that particular KM domain. After completing all four domains, the facilitator will add up all of KM elements across the four domains to identify the total KM Index Number. The total KM Index Number should be displayed out of a total of 27, the total number of KM elements in the Index.

However, not all KM elements need to be measured for every organization, especially if a specific element is not relevant to the organization. The denominator should always be the total number of KM elements that were measured; therefore it will not always be 27. In the example below, the organization answered **24** out of 27 KM elements/questions because some of the questions were considered to be irrelevant for its KM operation. The organization was only practicing three KM elements under each domain. Therefore, their KM Index number for each domain was 3. The facilitator then added the KM Index numbers under each domain to get the total KM Index Number ( $3+3+3+3=12$ ), which was **12**. This number was then displayed over the total number of KM elements/questions answered as **12/24**. By calculating this formula, the KM Index Score is determined. This last step of normalizing the data (i.e., converting the score into the range of 0 to 1) is essential because it helps the organization better compare different data sets. In this example, **the overall KM Index Score is 0.5** (or 50%).

KM Element	Possible KM Elements, by Domain	Number of Questions Answered	KM Index Number, by Domain	KM Index Score, by Domain (0 to 1)
1. Organizational Structure	7	5	3	$3/5 = 0.6$ (60%)
2. Learning Opportunities	5	5	3	$3/5 = 0.6$ (60%)
3. Internal KM Culture	10	8	3	$3/8 = 0.4$ (40%)
4. KM for Global Health	5	6	3	$3/6 = 0.5$ (50%)
<b>Total Possible</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>(See Below)</b>
<b>KM Index Score</b> (Normalized Range: 0 to 1)	<b><math>12/24 = 0.5</math> (50%)</b>			

## Development Process

The KM Index was developed through an iterative process. First, K4Health conducted a thorough review of relevant literature and assessment tools focused on KM and global health. Based on these findings, an extensive list of assessment questions and indicators were developed and subsequently grouped into four key KM domains. Then, the KM Index was tested in multiple settings, including a field-level KM project, a network of KM practitioners, and various global health projects over the course of approximately two years. The KM Index was tested, refined, and retested throughout this process to ensure clarity of questions, and the usability and validity of the tool. All in all, 13 focus groups, with approximately 51 participants representing various organizations, provided feedback on the KM Index.

## Using the Knowledge Management Index

Based on our experiences testing the KM Index with various organizations, we recommend the following protocol:

Steps	Description
<p><b>Step 1:</b> Discuss the KM Index with the organization's leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with the organization's leadership to discuss their health information needs and strategic plan for strengthening KM at the organization.</li> <li>• Explain the purpose of the KM Index and KM domains, and ask leadership to determine which KM domains seem relevant for their organization. Not every domain may be relevant to each organization.</li> <li>• Ask the organization to identify a staff member who will serve as a KM champion. The KM champion's role will be to support the facilitator in identifying participants, support the analysis and presentation of the findings, and lead the implementation of the recommendations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 2:</b> Select focus group facilitator and note taker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a focus group facilitator with experience collecting qualitative data, and conducting focus group discussions.</li> <li>• Select someone to take notes during the focus group discussion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 3:</b> Organize focus group discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct focus group discussions. Covering all four domains of the KM Index in one focus group takes approximately 90 minutes to complete.</li> <li>• Select participants from different teams on the project to ensure representative responses, in order to gain an overview of how each team uses KM.</li> <li>• Each focus group should include a maximum of five participants. We suggest, at minimum, the following groups for the focus group discussions:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct one focus group with senior management (e.g., director, CEO)</li> <li>- Conduct one focus group with mid-level management staff (e.g., program officer, manager)</li> <li>- Conduct one focus group with non-management staff (e.g., administration, operations)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Steps	Description
<p><b>Step 4:</b> Conduct focus group discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a meeting room that is private.</li> <li>• Arrange the chairs so that participants sit in a circle or around a table.</li> <li>• Prior to the start of the focus group, emphasize that all responses are confidential and will be reported anonymously, and ask that each participant not disclose any responses outside of the focus group. This statement at the start will encourage participants to be forthcoming and reassure them that their statements will not result in any repercussions.</li> <li>• Each KM domain has a description of the domain, a list of key questions related to KM elements within the domain, and illustrative probes. While the list of illustrative probes provides examples of follow-up questions to ask, the interviewer should base any additional questions on responses from participants.</li> <li>• For each domain, first read the description of the domain to the group. Next, ask each KM element question and relevant probing questions. For each question, record if the key element is present or not present in the column labeled “KM Index Number.” If the element is not present or systematic, record a “0.” If the element is present and systematic, record a “1.” These KM Index numbers will later be tallied and used to calculate the KM Index score. In addition to capturing this quantitative data, record the qualitative responses to the probes, as well as discussion points that may be relevant for recommendations for improving KM capacity, as bullets in the column labeled “Notes/Recommendations.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 5:</b> Analyze and present findings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the qualitative and discussion points for common themes, issues, and potential recommendations.</li> <li>• Remove identifying information from the responses.</li> <li>• Score each of the KM domains based on the responses from participants regarding the implementation of each KM activity.</li> <li>• Tally the scores of each domain to calculate the total KM Index Number.</li> <li>• Present the quantitative and qualitative findings to the organizational leadership and the KM champion.</li> <li>• Discuss the implications of each score with the organization. In general, when the (normalized) score is closer to 0, it may imply that the organization’s KM capacity is still weak. When the (normalized) score is closer to 1, it may imply that the organization has adequate KM capacity, though there are still areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Draft suggestions to strengthen the organization’s KM capacity and ask for feedback from the organization’s leadership and KM champion.</li> <li>• Present the findings to the full team to validate the findings and identify someone to serve as a KM champion and move the recommendation forward.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the KM champion to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations.</li> </ul>



## The Knowledge Management Index

I. Organizational Structure				
Description	Key KM Elements	Illustrative Probes	KM Index Number	Notes/ Recommendations
The organization has a common vision for KM, including an accepted definition of KM and a KM strategy related to the organization's mission. Resources are allocated for KM activities, including staff time and funds. The organization has staff members specifically assigned or dedicated to KM activities and responsibilities. Employees are knowledgeable about KM concepts, such as types of knowledge and knowledge exchange techniques, and perform their KM roles consistently as part of their job function.	1. Does your organization have a definition for KM?	What is your organization's definition of KM?	0 / 1	
	2. Does your organization have a KM strategy for internal KM?	What is your organization's internal KM strategy?	0 / 1	
	3. Does your organization have a KM strategy for external KM?	What is your organization's external KM strategy?	0 / 1	
	4. Does your organization have a staff member(s) assigned to internal KM activities and responsibilities?	How many employees are assigned to KM activities?	0 / 1	
	5. Does your organization set aside funds for internal KM activities?	How much money does your organization set aside for KM activities?	0 / 1	
	6. Does your organization set aside funds for external KM activities?		0 / 1	
	7. Does your organization conduct periodic surveys of all employees to determine information needs and measure satisfaction with existing KM activities?	How does management use findings from surveys?	0 / 1	
<b>Calculate KM Index Score</b> (Normalized Range: 0 to 1)	The total of KM Index number divided by the number of questions answered =			
<b>Organizational Structure KM Index Score and Key Notes/ Recommendations</b>				

2. Learning Opportunities				
Description	Key KM Elements	Illustrative Probes	KM Index Number	Notes/ Recommendations
The organization encourages learning and continuing professional development among its employees. The organization regularly offers training and other learning opportunities to strengthen existing skills and build new skills/ knowledge among staff members.	1. Do new staff hires receive an orientation, which provides an overview of the organization’s mission, work, and available learning opportunities?	Do staff take advantage of learning opportunities?	0 / 1	
	2. Do all employees receive ongoing training on common KM concepts, such as tacit and explicit knowledge and knowledge exchange techniques?	What are some examples of KM trainings offered to employees?	0 / 1	
	3. Does your organization regularly offer internal training opportunities to its employees?		0 / 1	
	4. Do employees have the opportunity to attend external training opportunities?		0 / 1	
	5. Do employees have the opportunity to attend conferences and meetings related to [organization’s field]?		0 / 1	
<b>Calculate KM Index Score</b> (Normalized Range: 0 to 1)	The total of KM Index number divided by the number of questions answered =			
<b>Learning Opportunities KM Index Score and Key Notes/ Recommendations</b>				

### 3. Internal KM Culture

Description	Key KM Elements	Illustrative Probes	KM Index Number	Notes/ Recommendations
<p>The organization has a strong internal KM culture in which employees are encouraged to share their knowledge with others and seek out new ideas/ approaches.</p>	1. Is everyone in the organization encouraged to seek out new ideas/approaches?		0 / 1	
	2. Are staff members supported (e.g., time, funds) in testing out new ideas/approaches?		0 / 1	
	3. Do employees receive incentives for sharing new information (e.g., recognizing contributions, offering monetary rewards)	Are these incentives effective in encouraging employees to share new information?	0 / 1	
	4. Are best practices collected and shared internally?	How often are best practices collected?	0 / 1	
	5. Are lessons learned collected and shared internally?	How often are lessons learned collected?	0 / 1	
	6. Is an internal database for storing best practices/ lessons learned available to all employees?	How often do employees access this internal database?	0 / 1	
	7. Does the organization have a directory that details each employee's competencies—to help staff identify which colleagues can be a resource?	How often is this skills directory utilized by staff?	0 / 1	
	8. Does your organization track the progress of its internal knowledge sharing initiatives?	How does the organization track the progress of internal KM initiatives?	0 / 1	
	9. Are employees able to safely report existing or potential problems to management?	How does management respond to reports regarding existing/ potential problems?	0 / 1	
	10. Do departing staff participate in a hand off process to document their knowledge for use by the organization?		0 / 1	
<p><b>Calculate KM Index Score</b> (Normalized Range: 0 to 1) <b>Internal KM KM Index Score and Key Notes/ Recommendations</b></p>	<p>The total of KM Index number divided by the number of questions answered =</p>			

4. KM for Global Health				
Description	Key KM Elements	Illustrative Probes	KM Index Number	Notes/ Recommendations
The organization has a robust external KM culture, in which the organization shares its knowledge—best practices/lessons learned—with external audiences in its field. The organization regularly seeks out new knowledge from external resources.	<b>[Initial question]</b> Which health topics does your organization’s work focus on?			
	1. Does the organization consistently seek out and adopt the latest technical guidelines for [topics mentioned in the initial question]?		0 / 1	
	a. If yes, please share two to three sources of technical guidance for your organization.			
	2. Do employees receive training on [topics mentioned in the initial question]?	How often are these trainings offered?	0 / 1	
	3. Are employees encouraged to join external professional organizations, such as working groups or associations, related to [topics mentioned in the initial question]?		0 / 1	
	4. Does your organization have a database for sharing its knowledge with external audiences?		0 / 1	
a. If yes, is this database routinely updated and managed?				
5. Does your organization track the progress of its external knowledge sharing database?	How does the organization track the progress of its external knowledge sharing database?	0 / 1		
<b>Calculate KM Index Score</b> (Normalized Range: 0 to 1)	The total of KM Index number divided by the number of questions answered =			
<b><u>KM for Global Health</u></b> <b>KM Index Score and Key Notes/ Recommendations</b>				

## Knowledge Management Index Summary

### Key Findings, Recommendations, and Action Plan

Domain	KM Index Score (Range: 0 to 1)	Key Qualitative Findings and Recommendations	Action Plan (Including KM Champion and Timeline)
1. Organizational Structure			
2. Learning Opportunities			
3. Internal KM Culture			
4. KM for Global Health			
<b>Overall KM Index Score</b>	The total of KM Index numbers divided by the number of questions answered (from all of the domains) =		
<b>KM INDEX SCORE AND KEY FINDINGS/ RECOMMENDATIONS</b>			

The Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project shares accurate, up-to-date knowledge and tools to strengthen family planning and reproductive health efforts worldwide.  
Learn more at [www.k4health.org](http://www.k4health.org)

