

Learning About Learning: Lessons on Implementing a KM and Learning Project from the USAID KDMD Project

Contractual Flexibility

What we mean by Contractual Flexibility:

A contractual mechanism creating flexibility in program design, program monitoring and evaluation, and implementation.

Why it matters:

Contractual flexibility provides the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR)/Contractor Officer's Representative (COR) and Activity Managers the legal maneuvering space to add, enhance, and adjust project objectives and project tasks throughout project implementation.

How it works:

Contractual flexibility is important in scoping and designing programs because it provides scalable input, responsiveness, and innovation over time. For example, new tasks can be added and ongoing tasks can be adjusted or reexamined.

The client and the contractor work together in determining the efficiency of project activities through constant monitoring and candid meetings during which the nature, impact, and scope of the work are discussed. There needs to be a palpable layer of trust for contractual flexibility to be viable. The contractor and the client work together to balance the accountability and success of work products.

Contractual flexibility is key on a knowledge management project because it creates a ripe environment for learning and invests resources in activities providing the best value for money.

What it looks like:

The KDMD Project was designed with a flexible contract that has allowed additional USAID operating units to buy-in over time and work streams to scale up and adapt based on continuous feedback, best practice, and innovation. As such, the project is not restricted to task orders that are can be unresponsive to changing technologies, conditions, and approaches. Instead, KDMD has been able to evolve and learn from experience in ways that improved its success.

Learn More:

Contractually speaking, the KDMD Project is a Statement of Objectives (SOO) and not a Statement of Work (SOW). This creates legal conditions for flexibility and adaptability in project implementation. There were initial doubts on the feasibility of monitoring such a project without tangible performance monitoring metrics. Skepticism was appeased by the iterative and adaptive management processes which examined and reassessed delivery of results on an ongoing basis and not in prescribed intervals of time. The AOR/COR, Activity Managers, and contractor must work together as knowledge peers to assess the success and efficiency of the tasks/activities on an ongoing basis. This is in large part possible due to the open-ended project scope which is contractually based on an SOO enabling the scalability of work and buy-ins.

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