FEED THE FUTURE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR FOOD SECURITY

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

March 2016
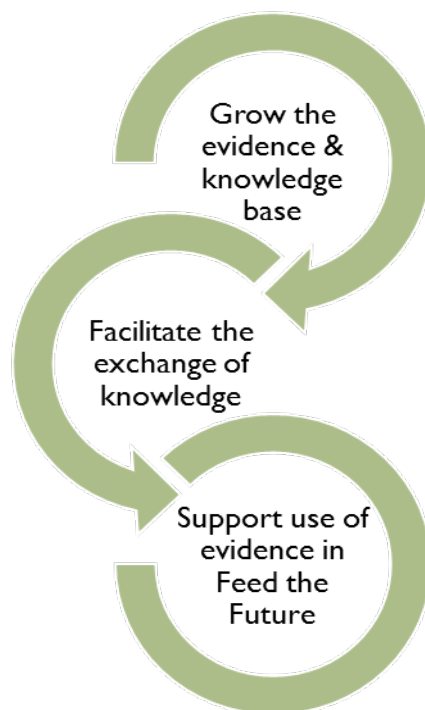
Grow the evidence & knowledge base

Facilitate the exchange of knowledge

Support use of evidence in Feed the Future

FEED THE FUTURE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR FOOD SECURITY

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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ACRONYM LIST

BFS	Bureau for Food Security
BPA	Blanket Purchase Agreement
CLA	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
COP	Community of Practice
EAT	USAID Enabling Agricultural Trade project
KM	Knowledge Management
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Office of Market and Partnership Innovations
SOW	Scope of Work
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. INTRODUCTION

The Feed the Future Enabling Environment for Food Security project offers tailored analysis, institutional strengthening, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and strategic knowledge management (KM) services for Feed the Future focused and aligned Missions and other USAID bureaus to address legal, institutional, and market constraints affecting food security.[1] A key premise to the KM work under the project will be to work with appropriately targeted key stakeholders and address priority technical knowledge needs as strategically and efficiently as possible to improve the enabling environment for food security.

The primary objective of this KM implementation plan is to **define an approach to enable consistent integration of knowledge management activities across the life of the project**. The plan builds on recommendations identified in the KM assessment conducted at the onset of the project to better understand the preferences and needs of the project key audiences. Specifically, this plan aims to do the following:

- Outline goals and considerations for KM under the project.
- Define key elements and steps to enable consistent management of project information across the blanket purchase agreement (BPA).
- Ensure project activities can support exchange of knowledge and learning between key audiences using a range of formats.

The plan highlights illustrative opportunities and innovative approaches to promote the exchange of knowledge across key audiences and priority topics for Feed the Future to improve the enabling environment for food security. The plan offers a framework for evaluating potential project activities and effectively integrating KM into all assignments. Finally, the plan proposes ways to ensure KM work stays up-to-date and contributes to current best practice in knowledge management.

In the sections that follow, we define the strategic approach and its core elements. For each core element, the plan provides illustrative activities to elucidate the types of engagement that could provide support. Selection of specific activities will be subject to USAID interest, guidance, and approval and will be further elaborated as part of the annual project work planning process in coordination with USAID. For work planning, activities will be specified each year around those that support project KM infrastructure, strengthen the evidence base and those that facilitate and deepen knowledge exchange and dialogue. The KM implementation plan is intended to be revisited annually so it can be updated based on key learnings and as needed to ensure relevance to the highly flexible and evolving nature of this demand-driven mechanism.

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[1] Managed by the USAID Bureau for Food Security's Office of Market and Partnership Innovations (MPI), the project has a ceiling of $13.5 million and period of performance of up to five years.

2. DEFINING AND STRUCTURING OUR KM APROACH

The Feed the Future Enabling Environment for Food Security project will use an integrated and multi-pronged approach to KM to:

- Create knowledge to **strengthen the evidence base** for effective programmatic action,
- Facilitate the **exchange of knowledge** among key actors to improve the state of practice,
- Support USAID and Feed the Future in **using evidence** to design and implement programs for the **biggest impacts on enabling environments for food security.**

The project should keep these goals at the forefront of decision making around the selection and development of KM activities. A key factor driving this KM approach is that it positions the project to leverage and coordinate with other USAID investments (in particular, but not limited to, Feed the Future) and those of other donors and actors. Based on the findings of the KM assessment, there is a strong foundation of KM resources and technical networks to build on, including online exchange platforms, technical networks, communities of practice, and project investments.

The core elements are predicated on this expressed interest and what will be needed for the project to successfully collaborate with, and utilize, existing infrastructure, networks, and tools.

The KM approach is therefore comprised of the following core elements:

- Establish a clear presence and be accessible
- Systematize and integrate KM across project operations
- Develop technical content to expand the evidence or knowledge base
- Cultivate our network
- Facilitate and support exchange of knowledge
- Embrace Collaborate, Learn and Adapt (CLA) in our work

These key elements guide how the project will work towards goals and will be translated into a number of activities over the life of the project. Each year, a select number of activities will be defined in consultation with our USAID partners. These activities will fall under one of three main activity areas including:

- **KM Infrastructure Activities**: Develop and maintain foundational resources to catalyze project KM and CLA work, establish internal KM processes and tools.
- **Technical Evidence Base Activities**: Generate new knowledge and/or curate and highlight existing knowledge into accessible and actionable resources for priority stakeholders as well as influencers and technical partners.

KM Activity Areas

- **Knowledge Exchange Activities**: Support relationship building across stakeholders and with the project, facilitate technical network development and maximize opportunities to exchange knowledge amongst priority actors and stakeholders.
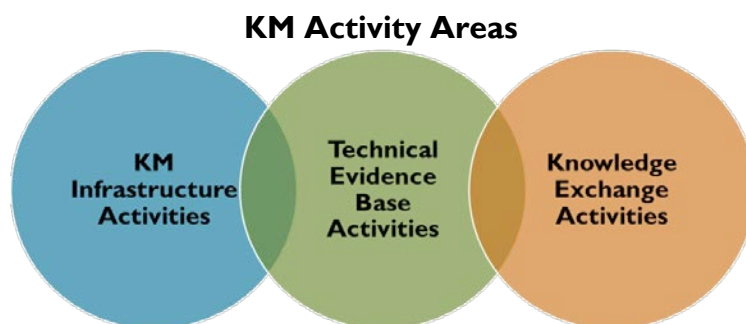
As illustrated in the graphic below, the elements of our approach correspond with the three main activity areas. Many activities could be cross-cutting across all three; however, being able to tie their primary function to the three areas will be critical for aligning investments at different times and ensuring the mix of activities meets evolving project objectives. For example, the first year will see activities across all three activity areas with more emphasis and resources dedicated up front to the establishment of infrastructure; in subsequent years there will be less need for infrastructure maintenance. The core elements provide guidance on how these activities are designed to help us achieve our KM and project goals. As referenced earlier, illustrative activities are built out of the KM needs assessment and represent suggested possible priorities at this time. Activity design will consult the user profiles, KM assessment findings, and the framework outlined in Section 4.
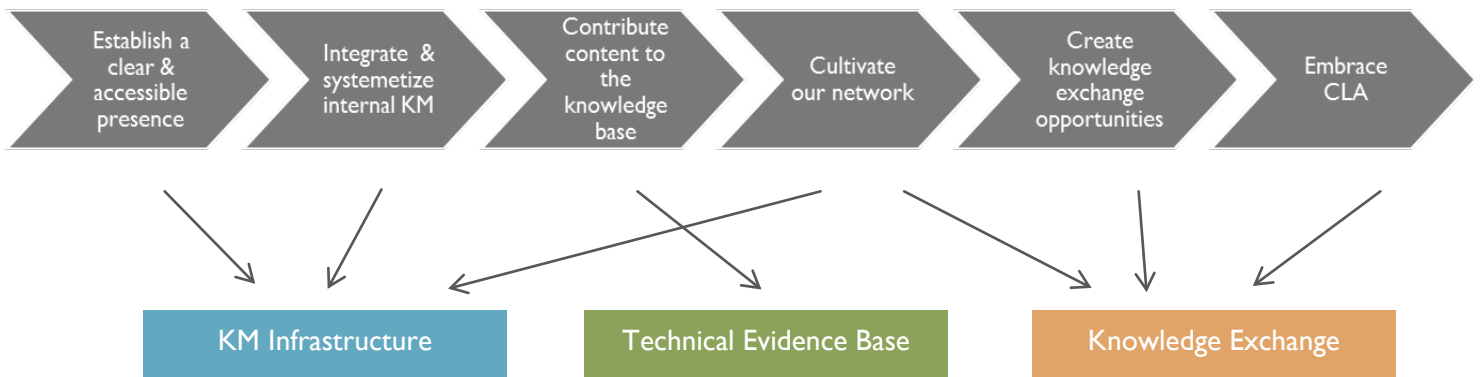
3. CORE ELEMENTS OF OUR KM APPROACH

3.1 ESTABLISH A PRESENCE AND BE ACCESSIBLE
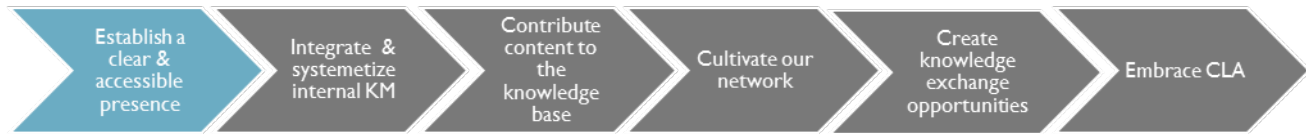
Who we are and what we do

A critical input to our work in knowledge management is being able to clearly define who we are, what we do, and how we do it. This is essential for USAID to make the most out of this mechanism and is ultimately key to supporting Feed the Future's varied efforts to improve the enabling environment for food security. The KM assessment told us people want to have information presented and distilled as clearly and to the point as possible. We need to develop a set of outreach materials oriented toward USAID staff to describe how they can work with us. Additionally, we need a similar but differentiated set for those with whom we will work more closely either on technical content or as partners disseminating or promoting knowledge exchange. This information supports and assists people in understanding how to work with us to access our services and how to best collaborate or coordinate with us.

This project also offers USAID access to technical resources, enhanced capacity, and institutional support to improve the enabling environment for food security, especially as it relates to Feed the Future. It is essential that target audiences for an activity are able to easily access our work and relevant knowledge generated. This is also important on another level for building the broader knowledge base. Based on the KM assessment and the state of USAID regulations – in particular guidance regarding project websites – the project proposes that a hybrid of online and person-to-person connections be utilized.[2] It is critical that our information can be easily passed on to others, that others are able to describe what we do, and that they know to whom and where to go for more information. More definitive and tailored strategies can be designed to meet different user group needs.

Illustrative activities:

- Develop and refine project and technical messaging for USAID and project leadership.
- Establish targeted materials for top audiences (USAID and potential partners) that provide a project overview and illustrate sample activities and services (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, one- or two-page briefers).
- Develop an outreach plan with USAID management staff that utilizes preferences and opportunities gathered during the KM assessment.
- Develop a series of in-person and web-based outreach activities to promote awareness of the project (e.g. brown bags at USAID, webinar or conference call with selected contacts introducing initial work and demonstrating how we can be a resource).
- Establish an online presence and plan for maximizing relevant existing knowledge exchange platforms as noted from the KM assessment (i.e. Agrilinks, Regional Trade Hubs).
- Establish templates for working together (e.g. MOUs and illustrative activity descriptions).
- Work closely with BFS communications staff and USAID communication channels to ensure appropriate content from the enabling environment for food security is appropriately profiled and featured in public Feed the Future publications and communications.

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[2] USAID Guidance for Stand-alone project websites https://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb

- Embrace a strong push approach to our engagement and dissemination that complements our pull strategies related to building our own presence in specific spaces. For instance, we will pull contacts and networks to the places and spaces we establish a presence and also push our content out to the places where key contacts and stakeholders are already going.

3.2   INSTITUTIONALIZE AND INTEGRATE KM ACROSS PROJECT OPERATIONS

Develop internal systems and processes to integrate KM into project operations.

To ensure knowledge generated by the project is systematically disseminated and intentionally designed with our end users in mind, a number of activities have been identified to integrate KM effectively and consistently. These systems and processes are designed to work with our technical tools and approaches in ways that work for our teams from the beginning to end of each activity.

Illustrative activities:

- Apply a common framework for activity scoping and design process (see section 4).
- Embed KM considerations into templates for activity SOW and develop checklists and tools to help technical leads identify appropriate considerations for KM in their work.
- Create internal project processes for managing and sharing knowledge (e.g. biweekly discussions, after action reviews, trackers for resources and dissemination plans, online tools).
- Establish ways that all staff on the project can support KM and contribute to a culture of collaborating, learning, and adapting.
- Create memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with key projects or groups where we intend to collaborate closely on activities.

3.3   DEVELOP TECHNICAL CONTENT TO EXPAND THE EVIDENCE BASE

The project expects to generate knowledge in a number of different ways on individual calls and activities under calls. These include, but are not limited to, analytical assessments, facilitated knowledge exchange events and stakeholder dialogues, technical briefing series and reports, blog series, presentations, webinars, and other formal and informal capacity building and learning products. Technical content will aim to fill important knowledge gaps, such as missing data and/or information in a specific context or on a specific issue, and/or to provide a synthesis or curation of evidence and knowledge, such as where content may exist but is currently not accessible in the right format. Synthesis and concise presentation of existing technical content can be just as important as new technical content.

Develop technical resources that address current knowledge gaps and contribute to the larger evidence base.

To be most impactful, KM resources and activities should look to address knowledge gaps found in the KM assessment and/or that have been identified by priority audiences (i.e. USAID/BFS/MPI). The

following opportunities should be considered carefully, as they could provide the foundation for future investments, effective exchange and improved actions to support the enabling environment.

Illustrative activities:

- Identify key data sources by each of the Tier 1 and top selected Tier 2 topic areas from the KM assessment.

- Identify other donor investments by country or by technical area, as requested, that could be complementary and leveraged further by Feed the Future.

- Work with USAID to promote information and knowledge sharing between offices, Missions, and different agencies.

- Develop technical briefing series on high priority and relevant topics (e.g. Enabling the Business of Agriculture series).

- Work with partners to generate a robust collection of programmatic and evidence-driven resources on the enabling environment for food security.

Focus on key technical areas and ways to add continuous value to Feed the Future.

The evolving state of Feed the Future also offers an important lens through which to align the technical focus of the project's KM work both now and in the future. It will be important to define, and refine over time, for whom this value will be generated, from Mission staff leading the initiative in their countries, to supporting USAID/Washington efforts in shaping high-level dialogues, to host government counterparts, private-sector partners, and/or implementing project partners.

Illustrative activities:

- Conduct review of Feed the Future programs to document the ways different projects and countries have supported reforms and or specific activities to improve the enabling environment for food security.

- Work with Feed the Future and USAID/BFS/MPI to update and/or revisit relevant aspects of the Feed the Future learning agenda.[3]

- Establish with USAID/BFS/MPI a database of Feed the Future (and MPI especially) enabling environment for food security related current investments to inform distillation and aggregation of good practice, programming gaps, innovations. It ultimately will inform promote dialogue around potential collaborations.

- Inform different USAID and Feed the Future strategies and respective processes with synthesized knowledge products.

3.4   CULTIVATE OUR NETWORK

Systematically manage contacts, define opportunities to stay connected, and strengthen relationships with our champions and key stakeholders.

The KM assessment respondents highlighted the importance of relationships for knowledge exchange, in terms of both informal and formal relationships. Individuals represent many of the trusted sources that respondents go to and also fuel the strong stated preferences for face-to-face and in-person formats for

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[3] Feed the Future Learning Agenda http://agrilinks.org/library/feed-future-learning-agenda

accessing and exchanging information. The systematic and intentional documentation of informal and formal networks has the potential to inform niche groups around different technical areas. It also provides a valuable resource to USAID and Feed the Future for disseminating key updates and the foundation for getting the right set of people involved in knowledge exchange and evidence-building efforts.

Illustrative activities:

- Capture and manage contacts systematically through development and maintenance of an electronic database of stakeholder contacts.

- Establish periodic targeted personal contact with champions, key influencers, and/or other stakeholders.

- Establish routine contact with our network of stakeholders (i.e., monthly highlights or quarterly news).

- Identify strategic and intentional relationship-building activities and opportunities (i.e., phone calls, brown-bags, webinars, invite-only facilitated discussions, and other knowledge-sharing events).

- Defining targeted pilot activities with champions where strategic opportunities come up

- Contribute regularly and monitor key communities of practice identified related to stated priority areas (e.g., markets). Consider strategic and authentic engagement that aligns with resourcing and USAID priority technical areas.

- Pilot strategic partnerships around a common event, group and/or work product with a key influencer or actor came out of the KM assessment to build relationships and cohesion between different stakeholder agendas for common goals.

3.5   FACILITATE AND SUPPORT EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE

Convene and facilitate knowledge exchange with key stakeholders around critical topics.

Fostering knowledge exchange is an important way that the project can support uptake of technical findings and promote evidence as a driver in decision-making through Feed the Future programming. The project can do this by supporting dialogue with targeted and strategically engaged audiences, such as USAID Missions in a particular region or practitioners around a commonly cited constraint. The project can also do this by promoting dialogue between parts of USAID that may or may not typically be interacting as much as they would like (i.e., different bureaus or offices within bureaus). Additionally, the project can support learning from one country to another for different stakeholders. Coming up with incentives and outcomes that resonate for stakeholders will be critical to any activity undertaken. Considerations around how people prefer to work and engage will be very useful, particularly related to participation in groups and/or learning networks.

Illustrative activities:

- Facilitate Global Learning Exchange Event and other exchanges leading up to the main event.

- Contribute to the Feed the Future Global Forum.

- Support existing communities of practice, learning networks, and working groups.

- Generate opportunities for projects to learn from each other (within MPI and also more broadly those working in enabling environment across Feed the Future).

- Co-develop materials and/or events with other influencers.

- Host in-person side events at seminars and/or workshops.

- Conduct webinars, conference calls, and online exchanges.

- Maintain database created in the KM assessment that highlights different online platforms, expanding it to include other formats for sharing knowledge managed by others.

3.6   EMBRACE CLA IN OUR WORK

Put CLA principles into practice for highest returns to enabling environments for food security.

In designing KM activities that contribute meaningfully to the knowledge base for the enabling environment for food security, it will be important to consider the project's work in relation to other actors, institutions, and projects. It will be critical to continually reassess our progress and explore new and better ways to accomplish our objectives and work with other actors in this space. Using information and knowledge to drive our own decision-making will be key to our approach. Embracing CLA will require staying on top of current KM and CLA good practice, understanding new and evolving dissemination channels in this space, and being open and proactive about exploring new formats for reaching people. CLA is also about the ways in which we institutionalize collaboration, learning, and adaptation as part of what we do and how we work with others in the enabling environment for food security.

Illustrative activities:

- Participate in selected KM groups and networks to contribute to and learn about others experiences with new innovations and established good practices related to knowledge exchange to improve the knowledge base.

- Contribute lessons learned and share knowledge through varied relevant technical channels.

- Revisit the KM assessment at a later point in time during the life of the project.

- Conduct follow-up with end users after activities (i.e., conduct abbreviated "after action" reviews, surveys or key informant interviews).

- Coordinate regularly with USAID project leadership and Mission service users.

- Establish routine internal project technical discussions as well as participation in DC-based and online events to stay abreast of state of evidence and best practice.

- Instill periodic reflection and reviews with project staff and consultants for new activities to ensure lessons learned are captured and future work can be adapted accordingly.

4. FRAMEWORK TO INFORM KM ACTIVITY SELECTION AND DESIGN

Given the demand-driven and flexible nature of the project, it will be critical to apply a common design process to all activities to ensure the different technical areas of knowledge generated, curated, and facilitated by the project not only consistently reach target stakeholders and practitioners but also feed more broadly into the state of evidence on the enabling environment for food security. To ensure knowledge resonates and aligns with stakeholder needs and preferences, the resources of the project, and the objectives of our technical activities, a framework has been created to simplify and promote consistency in the way activities integrate KM. The framework will also ensure knowledge generated will feed into appropriate dissemination channels to reach key stakeholders. The table on the following page outlines this framework through a set of steps for the project staff and USAID to take as part of the activity design process. By thinking through the questions associated with each step at the onset, activities will be better designed to make the most of both the knowledge generated and the different knowledge exchange formats available for its distribution to maximize impact.

A key resource to consult as part of this process will be the Excel database of different online exchange platforms. As noted earlier, it is expected that this database will be built out over the life of the project to include more specific information about technical areas of focus and their reach and include tabs for other types of dissemination beyond online exchange platforms (e.g. relevant journals, technical workshops or in-person learning venues, larger events, and other online venues such as webinar series).

Another critical consideration in selection of methods will be the evaluation of trade-offs in terms of potential impact, cost, and ability to reach the desired audience between different methods of knowledge capture, synthesis, dissemination, and exchange. Maintaining estimates of cost (with assumption scenarios) for various distribution methods will inform the decision making process and ensure the project is positioned to utilize different methods in a cost- and impact-sensitive manner. This list of different formats and resourcing requirements should be continually updated and built out based on projected demand and what the project sees as innovative ways to meet expressed needs in an impactful way. Similarly, maintaining lists of complementary assets that can be utilized by the project (e.g. strategic partnerships with different groups, projects, outlets, and channels) will increase the ease with which this process can be woven into the design of an activity.

Additional recommendations can be built out each year based on USAID requests for specific target audiences, topics, and Feed the Future needs.

Framework for successfully integrating KM into project activities

Step 1: Engage with USAID to define the top-tier and if relevant second-tier audiences or end users. Wherever possible try to isolate the top potential users.

- *Who do we want to reach as our top priority audience?*
- *Are these the end users?*
- *Are there other audiences we should consider?*

Step 2: Establish what the purpose of the activity is, i.e. what we hope the end users do as a result of engaging with the activity.

- *What is the objective we are trying to accomplish with this activity or product?*
- *What do we want people to do as a result of engaging in this activity?*

Step 3: Consult KM assessment user profiles. Follow-up with USAID Mission or Washington and other stakeholders to learn more about the context and specific stakeholder preferences and needs.

- *What do we know about this audience's preferences and how to reach them?*

Step 4: Consider different resources available (especially financial) and weigh against the resource investments required of different methods.

- *What are the resources we have to work with to accomplish this?*
- *What are potential tradeoffs in terms of value and return on investment from different methods?*

Step 5: Review possible influencers and key stakeholders and consider what roles they could play to support activity (i.e. partners, working groups, or others that are have access to networks and channels to increase activity uptake or impact).

- *What assets outside the project should we consider that could be useful to accomplish activity objectives?*

Step 6: Define our role. Select an approach and method/format for capturing, exchanging, and/or disseminating knowledge. Identify others we need to work with and garner their support.

- *What can we capture, disseminate, and/or facilitate in terms of knowledge to support the objectives?*
- *Who else offers comparative value to accomplish the objectives?*
- *How will we work with them?*

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