KM Impact Challenge: Case Story

Title: Global Health eLearning Center: Learning and Evolving

Organization: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs

- **Describe the KM initiative (250)**

 The challenge for developing country health professionals to obtain up-to-date information and guidance on public health and program management topics continues to exist despite substantial investment of funds to develop and distribute resources.

As a response to growing demand from the field for high-quality, technical updates, USAID Global Health Bureau of developed the Global Health eLearning (GHeL) Center in 2005. Technical experts author the free, asynchronous online courses that are open to the public. The courses are housed on a state of the art platform specifically designed to make courses accessible to learners in areas where internet bandwidth is an issue. In addition, some courses have been made available as fully functional offline versions – on flash drives and CD-ROMS – in an effort to reach as many learners as possible and allow for in-country adaptation of courses.

GHeL's primary intended audience is USAID field staff and their implementing partners. However, the courses are also accessed by a significant secondary audience of public health professional in developing countries who are not affiliated with USAID or other USG agencies. This audience comprises 80% of registered learners.

Over 67,000 learners have completed at least one or more of the 40+ courses on the GHeL Center. In addition, nine new certificate programs have been developed, which enable learners to receive a certificate for successfully completing a series of courses in a specific technical or programmatic area. This helps learners focus their study and expand their knowledge in key public health areas.

- **Describe the approaches utilized to measure / assess this KM initiative (350)**

A multi-prong approach is used to measure the success of the Global Health eLearning (GHeL) initiative. First, a learner must register with the website in order to gain access to the free courses. This registration allows for the collection of basic statistics on the number of learners accessing courses, background information about each learner (country, organizational affiliation and job title), what courses they have started, and which courses they have successfully completed.

Second, the platform was designed to specifically reach learners' knowledge and comprehension levels, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, a foundational learning theory within education. Each course contains a series of modules or chapters, each with a pre and post-test, and a final exam. Success is measured by the number of learners who take and successfully pass a course's final exam with a score of 85% or higher, indicating a minimum level of knowledge acquisition.

Finally, learners who pass a course's final exam must complete a course evaluation, which provides data on satisfaction with the presentation of the course materials, on any difficulties they experienced in accessing the course, and on the learner's plans to use the information from the course. The course evaluation also allows learners to comment on the quality of the course material, encouraging them to

take on a collaborative role in providing feedback on course content and structure and making recommendations for future courses. Learners are also required to submit brief action plans which detail how they intend to use their newly acquired knowledge.

Analysis of GHeL statistics demonstrates that GHeL is successful in documenting learners' experience with course materials and their reported increased knowledge, with over 67,000 certificates having been earned since GHeL was launched. Although GHeL has reached its intended goal, there is still a need for more in-depth assessment of how learners apply the knowledge obtained from a course after completion and the effect of the knowledge obtained on job performances. Currently, the GHeL team is working to develop appropriate survey tools to gather this information.

- **What was the purpose or motivation for assessing this KM initiative? (50)**

The purpose of evaluating the GHeL Center is to monitor its reach and impact, identify ways to strengthen and enhance learners' experience, and document GHeL's contribution to global public health eLearning to justify continued funding and evolve with the learning needs of our audiences.

- **What were the most important lessons learned from the assessment process**? **(250)**

Evaluation data validates GHeL as an accessible, in-demand resource for learners to increase knowledge and understanding of technical and program guidance on public health topics. GHeL is being used by more than 67,000 learners. Most learners are from developing countries. Fifteen of the top 30 countries receiving certificates are located in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by 8 Asian countries.

The evaluation also highlights the difficulties that GHeL has encountered in systematically using data on the use of courses as catalysts for learning, professional growth, and improved program management. Most existing course evaluation questions were open-ended and responses were too numerous to analyze.

As a result, the GHeL team is putting in place a more systematic assessment process that will not only better collect data on learners' self-satisfaction, knowledge, comprehension, and use of course materials but also analyze the data quarterly to regularly inform and update the development of courses and introduce new features to the platform.

Thanks to a GHeL Facebook page, learners can also provide real time feedback on their learning experience and how they have used the knowledge gained from completing the courses. For example, an official from the Egypt Ministry of Health recently reported on Facebook that the Ministry had used the information from GHeL courses to update the country's national family planning training package. This feedback is invaluable in helping the team to make courses more user-centric. Thanks to social media GHeL no longer has to rely completely on traditional evaluation methods to obtain feedback from users.

- **What would you do differently next time**? **(100)**

GHeL would benefit from efforts to systematize the compilation, analysis and dissemination of data from its learners. In the past, data was only analyzed when needed, but a more regular review of the data would ensure the GHeL Center stays up-to-date and relevant. A more regular review process for

existing courses, in addition to more creative outlets for disseminating courses would benefit both GHeL and the learners themselves.

- **What advice would you give to others based on your experience? (100)**

Programs should be receptive and technologies flexible enough to address the changing needs of one's audience and changes in technology, regularly testing new and creative ways of expanding and promoting access to information.

eLearning should integrated into a larger capacity building strategy, which includes specific guidance for keeping content and technology current as well as outlines a systematic process for evaluating eLearning activities. This process should be adaptable to reflect audience feedback and be implemented from the onset in order to capture complete sets of data regarding effectiveness, usage, and access.

- **What do you think are the main unanswered questions or challenges related to this field of work? (100)**

While eLearning is established in educational circles, eLearning is relatively young in the field of international development. Therefore, the level of acceptance is not always very high. Although eLearning has shown to be as effective as traditional, face-to-face methods of learning, there have not been in-depth studies that track the effectiveness of eLearning activities on a learner's long-term ability to transfer the increased knowledge into improvements in job performance, especially around improvements in health outcomes. In addition, there is very little evidence on the cost-effectiveness of this mode of knowledge delivery versus face-to-face trainings.