

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

Risks

What we mean by Risks:

Implementing a knowledge management (KM) and learning approach is not without risks, particularly the risk of managing expectations and establishing clarity around activities and investments.

How it works:

One of the main risks of implementing KM and learning approaches involves the resources (investments in time, money, and staff) that it takes to scope and develop these activities and products. It's not uncommon to receive pushback from stakeholders who expect immediate results but by building trust, communicating implications, and demonstrating progress, these concerns can be alleviated.

Learn More:

The following are a few tips for mitigating these risks:

- Set clear goals
- Segment and understand the audience in order to communicate the right messages
- Identify champions who can drive the work internally
- Manage expectations by gauging demand and understanding what people are looking to accomplish in relation to what can be realistically promised
- Engage leadership to establish ownership and buy-in
- Monitor progress and update stakeholders on achievements
- Measure success by engaging stakeholders early to define how they see success and determine indicators towards that end

Why it matters:

Mitigating these risks is important to establish buy-in and receive the full support necessary to achieve success. Since a strong KM and learning project requires engagement and close feedback loops, it's critical that stakeholders understand the value of the approach so that they can participate fully in the process.

What it looks like:

KM and learning can be one of those “fuzzy” areas that can be difficult to define. In working with new stakeholders and buy-ins, the KDMD team often struggled with bringing people up to speed on how KM and learning services fit together in a comprehensive approach. To address this issue, the team held a brainstorming session to discuss “what we do and how we do it.” From the session, the communications team designed “KDMD KM Fundamentals” along with a list of services that helped establish a common language among project staff. Moreso, this one-pager was then used in stakeholder meetings to help define the work of the project and resulting conversations led to many “aha” moments of clarity and resolution.