

# Knowledge management promotes innovation

## What is knowledge management?

Knowledge management (KM) involves capturing lessons about things that have been done and how they have been achieved within a particular context and institutional setting. It also addresses how knowledge can be transferred and achievements reproduced.

For the purposes of the State Partnership for Accountability Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC), knowledge management is defined as *"the process of managing information flows to extract, capture and communicate useful knowledge that supports innovation in governance processes."*

## How does SPARC use knowledge management?

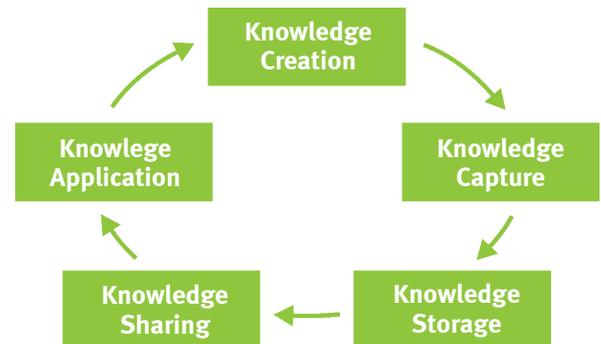
Because SPARC works to improve the performance of public sector management, we need to know *what* reforms to introduce and *how* to implement them. This requires us to identify, access, interpret, redistribute and store knowledge on a whole range of different subjects — which makes the application of good knowledge management tools and techniques invaluable to SPARC teams working to pilot reforms with partners in government ministries, departments and agencies.

## What principles guide SPARC's knowledge management work?

SPARC's KM work stream supports SPARC's partners by responding to their needs and demands. Though it can provide a modest level of service support itself, the KM work stream mainly works to source and develop capacity and plan actions.

## How does SPARC ensure that lessons are learned?

SPARC's knowledge management agenda is designed to encourage reflection, analysis and learning in



order to transform flows of information into useful insights and knowledge. Such objective lesson-learning is difficult to factor in to project implementation; but, the right tools can help greatly. These range from concrete tools (like an easy-to-use intranet), to techniques (like innovation diaries, which are used to capture innovative thinking).

The important insights that emerge from using such tools can reveal not only which technical reforms work, but (crucially) which are appropriate to specific political and institutional environments.

This approach also recognises that reform can only be managed successfully if the factors driving it are understood. This sort of knowledge can often not be derived from conventional reporting: it is 'soft' or 'tacit' knowledge requiring different tools and processes to acquire it.

## Who is involved with knowledge management at SPARC?

All of SPARC's stakeholder groups use KM. These fall into five broad categories:

- SPARC management and implementation teams and, through them
- Ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in the lead States and at the Federal level;
- Other State-led Programmes (SLP), cooperating on areas of common interest;
- Those interested in undertaking parallel reforms in non-lead States; and
- The wider national and international community of practitioners.

## What work does SPARC KM support?

SPARC's five knowledge management work areas reflect the interests of its stakeholders.

**(1) Support to KM initiatives within the work streams of lead State work programmes** – this includes helping lead states to (i) track and capture lessons and support capacity within MDAs, (ii) communicate awareness of reforms, and (iii) produce relevant communication materials.

**(2) Wider replication and adoption in non-lead States** – such work emphasises the production of appropriate studies and materials to encourage replication and help develop capacity.

**(3) Coordination with other State-led programmes** – the aim being not only to share knowledge and successful experience, but also to harmonise approaches within broad common-interest areas.

**(4) Knowledge sharing to support the efficient management of SPARC** – the aim being to support efficient collaboration throughout SPARC management and implementation teams, and help partner organisations adopt such practices as part of a planned exit strategy.

**(5) Support to SPARC's Federal component** – by supporting the programme's Federal component and its interfaces with State bodies, SPARC's knowledge management work helps push forwards and enhance reform processes.

## What practical tools does knowledge management provide?

SPARC is using various KM tools, including video diaries, communities of practice, and story capture and lesson-learning processes, etc.

A key tool for knowledge capture is the Innovation Diary – a simple technique for keeping a record of events during a project's life time and linking them to significant 'turning points'. It is an important starting point for subsequent analysis, leading to insights about how change was achieved.

An interactive intranet (the Fountain) provides shared access to all important documentation, together with an organisational diary, contact details, news items and other useful information.

Detailed Briefing Notes support each element of the KM toolkit.

## Where does communications fit in?

Knowledge management and communications are inseparable. Communication functions appear at all levels throughout the SPARC KM strategy as the means of transmitting and sharing information and knowledge. The main communications aims are to:

- Set communications goals and sets of key messages;
- Support communications activities within the KM work dimensions;
- Identify assistance for communications work in MDAs; and
- Maintain quality and a clear and consistent image for all SPARC outputs.

## How is the knowledge management team structured in SPARC?

The SPARC KM team consists of the Abuja-based KM staff; front-line KM Officers in State offices (who may be full or part-time); and a range of external consultants and service providers.

The use of local advisers also supports one of the long-term goals of the SPARC Programme, which is to leave behind an enhanced capacity within Nigeria for continued improvement in public sector performance.

The KM Strategic Plan describes these knowledge management and communications approaches in more detail, and can be obtained from any member of the KM team.

## Contact details

SPARC has six offices in Nigeria.  
For more information on our work email  
[info@sparc-nigeria.com](mailto:info@sparc-nigeria.com),  
telephone +234 (0) 7029 682832.  
Or visit our website at [www.sparc-nigeria.com](http://www.sparc-nigeria.com)

**sparc**

