

Knowledge Management for SA cities

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Felicity Kitchin Research Consultants

Felicity Kitchin
Wendy Ovens
Mark Turpin

Research Objective

A. To assess the *current state of knowledge management* in South African cities

B. To use this to *develop a toolkit* to inform knowledge management practitioners in SA cities and municipalities

A. The Research:
Current state of KM in SA
cities

Introduction

- Municipalities with effective KM practices are **more competitive** and more effective than others
- Municipalities **already engage** in KM at various levels and in different ways, even if this is not always referred to as KM
- These practices may be **scattered, fragmented**, ad hoc, and not efficiently organised, which prevents municipal leaders from using organisational knowledge to develop strategic plans and policies for the future
- Need to develop ways that existing KM practices are **coordinated, shared and used more effectively** so that the municipality can use its experiences and the combined knowledge of its employees to **improve how it operates and achieve its vision**

Research Methodology

- Survey of KM champions
- KMRG workshop
- Desk-top review
- Draft reports on status-quo amended
- Leadership survey

Comparison of SACN cities

- Understanding and definition of KM
- Institutional location of KM
- KM staff
- Internal KM structures
- IT infrastructure
- Key strengths/ successes
- Key weaknesses/ challenges
- Status of KM – strategy, audits, implementation etc
- Key KM practices

Definition and understanding

- Looking at the more *strategic* aspects, municipalities regard KM as:
 - “enhancing business processes and management”
 - “integrating knowledge corporately”
 - “creating benefit and competitive advantage”
 - “generating value from knowledge based assets”
- Four municipalities referred directly to their core mandate, specifically mentioning the potential benefits for improved service delivery in their understanding of knowledge management

Some findings

- Staff and budget vary greatly
- IT varies, 5 Sharepoint, most intranet
- 7 municipalities mentioned senior management support
- Buffalo City has 3 political champions of KM
- Common strength is peer exchanges or partnerships, both locally and internationally
- eThekweni's strengths in sharing and learning, through MILE, including master classes
- Dissemination practices such as Jo'burg Insider

Weaknesses

- **Silo mentality**
- **Internally focused**
- **Lack of leadership support**
- **Documentation vs. change** - need to develop mechanisms whereby information is not only documented efficiently, but is also used to improve future practice, to filter information for strategic use
- **Lack of resources**
- **Lack of buy-in** from departments
- **Lack of KM culture**
- **Need to incorporate KM in KPAs**
- **Need guidance on the appropriate ICT platform**

Resources

- Often the **commitment of one or a few people** that ensures that KM is taken seriously and developed further. This is particularly the case of the smaller and less well-resourced cities. This can lead to problems if KM “activist” leaves the municipality, as in Mangaung
- Not having a larger budget does not mean it is not possible to develop an effective approach to KM. **Much can be done with relatively low levels of resources.** However, **it is important that KM is resourced adequately.**
- Smaller municipalities should not feel discouraged by comparing their situation with those of the three largest cities, as much can be done if **officials and their leadership** are motivated and committed.
- What is important is to encourage the **development of a culture of sharing and learning** which can promote effective KM

3 largest cities

- Johannesburg, eThekweni and Cape Town
- All have established KM policies, processes and practices, and are in the process of institutionalising this
- Emphasise different aspects:
 - Johannesburg is developing a group or corporate approach, drawing in its municipal entities as well as core departments
 - eThekweni, through MILE, appears to have a more external focus
 - Cape Town seems to place more emphasis on knowledge management and sharing internally

3 medium cities

- Ekurhuleni, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Bay
- Do not have as much in common with each other as do the larger three
- Both Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Bay are in the process of trying to develop KM
- Ekurhuleni appears to be at the very early stages of recognising the importance of knowledge management

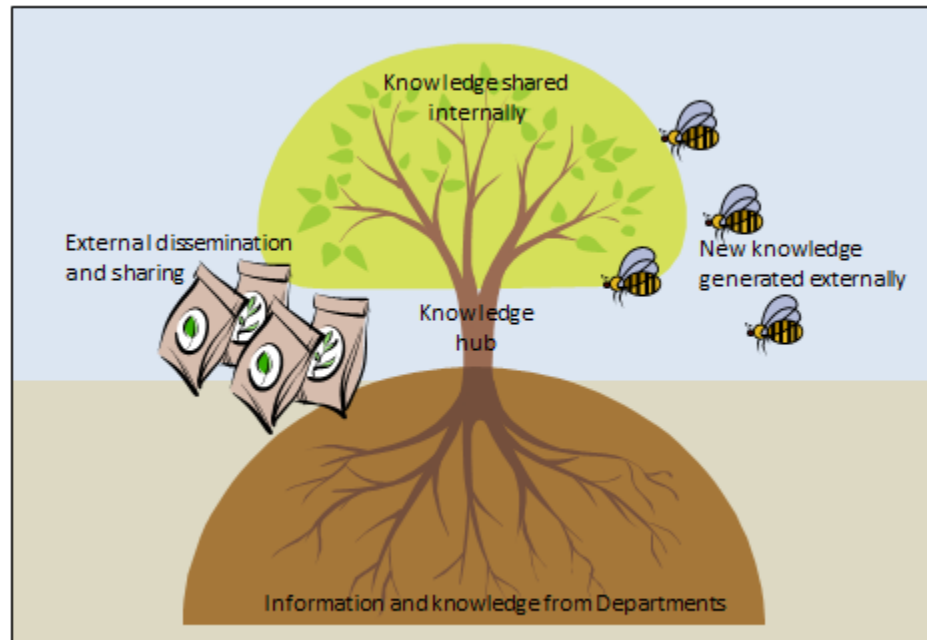
3 smaller cities

- Buffalo City, Mangaung and Msunduzi also vary
- Buffalo City, one of the three smaller cities, is an exception in that its experience is more similar to those of the three largest cities. Began formal KM activities in 2008 and has well-developed knowledge management policies and activities
- Mangaung started recognising and institutionalising knowledge management relatively early, but, with the resignation of the key official, this suffered several setbacks and is in the process of being re-established
- Although Msunduzi's senior leadership recognised the importance of knowledge management in their responses to the research survey, this has not yet translated into actions

Conclusion

- KM means decision makers make decisions based on what the organisation knows
- KM is not an end itself or a compliance issue, but needs to address the following questions:
 - **What** do we need to know to achieve our vision for our municipality?
 - What knowledge will **help us move** from where we are now to where we want to be?
 - How do we know **what to ask, how to get the answers** and **how to use** the answers we get to achieve our vision?

Learning, sharing, internally and externally



B. The Toolkit

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT:

A Toolkit for South African Municipalities



Who is the toolkit for?

- Anyone involved in KM in municipalities
- By embedding good KM practice throughout the municipality, **senior managers** not only support KM but also contribute to learning and sharing of knowledge
- **staff** are motivated to contribute to knowledge creation and sharing
- **everyone** recognises the benefits of knowledge management

Organisation of toolkit

The toolkit is divided into four sections:

1. KM Basics – looks at the key KM concepts and definitions
2. Steps to setting up KM in a municipality
3. Common KM tools or methods
4. Annexures containing worksheets and other useful information

SECTION

The Basics of KM

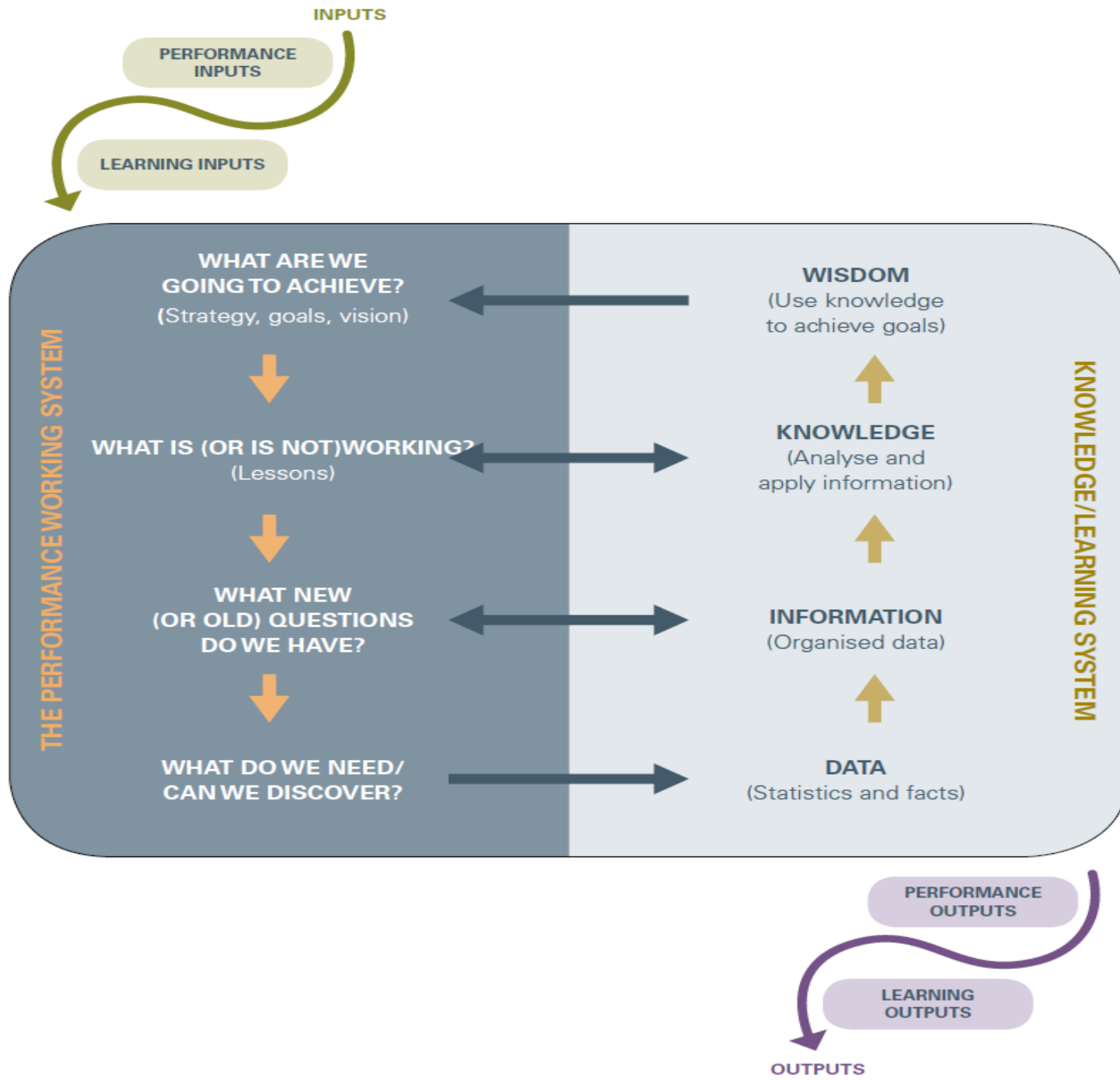


What is KM?

- KM is the **creation, identification, collection, organisation, sharing, adaptation and use of internal knowledge and best practices.**
- KM is **not simply IT systems and databases** or information management.
- KM also **emphasises culture and work practices**, adding value to information stored in an accessible manner on databases, and interpreting information by people.
- KM is a **strategic function**, not an end to itself or a compliance issue.
- KM is an **incremental process**, which means that municipalities can start small and build up. A sophisticated and expensive system is not needed from the outset.

From demand to supply

- Knowledge managers should explore the ***demand side*** (**what senior managers require**) before focusing on the *supply side* (the systems that make knowledge available to users and the sharing of knowledge and information).
- Therefore, knowledge managers need to be in continuing dialogue with municipal managers to understand the municipality's strategic decision-making processes, to ensure that the KM system generates useful and relevant information to support these processes.



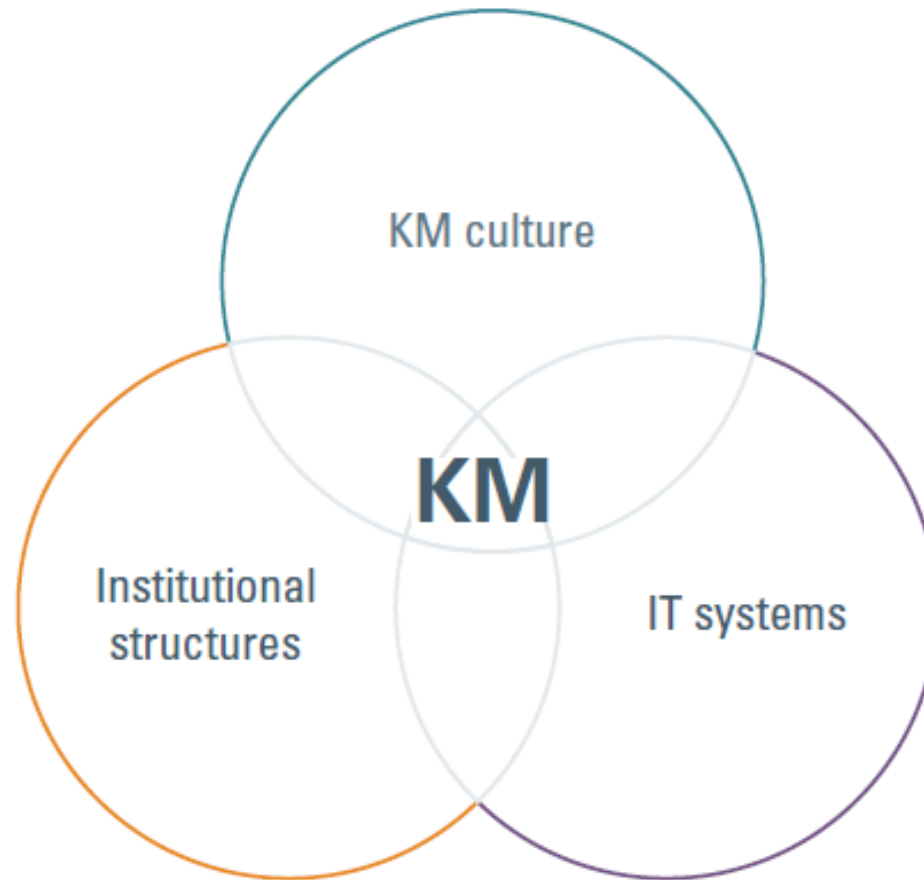
Explicit and tacit knowledge

- *Explicit knowledge*: can be captured and transformed. E.g. IT systems transform data into useful information formats presented as reports to municipal managers.
- *Tacit knowledge*: is knowledge people carry in their heads and is less concrete. It comes from experience, engagement and dialogue with others. It is knowledge that is implied but not expressed and is not easily captured in IT systems but requires a work environment and culture that supports (and rewards) sharing and learning.

Effective knowledge management

- Development of a **knowledge management culture** across the organization which ensures that people understand the value of sharing what they do with others, and of learning from others
- Supported by **institutional structures** and systems that facilitate the capture, storage and sharing of information and knowledge.
- Underpinned by **effective IT systems** that enable accurate, reliable and useful information to be captured, disseminated and accessed.

Effective knowledge management



KM culture

KM is considered everybody's business and is publicly acknowledged.

- People are treated like assets and feel free to offer an opinion or idea.
- People see themselves as members of multiple communities and routinely share their ideas, technology or methods within and among departments.
- Failure is considered an opportunity to learn, success an occasion to share.

Institutional structure

KM policy and framework are established and broadly supported by senior management.

- A group or person leads the KM effort, and KM techniques are integrated into strategic planning and reports.
- Processes for sharing knowledge exist (e.g. exit interviews, post-project meetings, face-to-face interactions and electronic communications).
- A municipal programme is in place to recognise knowledge contributions made by staff.

IT systems

A fully integrated IT platform ensures seamless information flow across the municipality.

- All staff are able to search across a wide variety of applications and databases.
- Requests for knowledge posted to the intranet or discussion forums are easy to understand.
- The formation of different, cross-boundary networks of people is promoted.

For local govt, KM improves:

- ***Decision making***: by harnessing global knowledge, lessons learned and good practice
- ***Service delivery***: by enabling innovation, productivity and problem solving
- ***Efficiency***: by sharing knowledge and learning, thereby shortening the lag time between ideas and implementation and making information accessible, which reduces costs
- ***Responsiveness***: by increasing the quality and speed of communication between employees and managers, as well as with the public

- ***Learning***: by creating the opportunity for employees to develop their skills, performance and experience, thereby building employee satisfaction and motivation
- ***Institutional memory***: by preserving, developing, using and sharing knowledge, which is not lost when experienced employees leave
- ***Democratic governance***: by providing accessible information to the public, who feel more connected and involved with governance systems
- ***Accountability***: by ensuring transparent, open systems that reduce the potential for corruption and unethical behaviour

SECTION

Developing KM



KM resources

The key to successful KM is **people**, not cutting-edge technology. They need to be enthusiastic about sharing knowledge, learning from each other and other institutions, and be well placed to carry forward the strategic use of knowledge.

Components of KM resources:

- KM champion
- Supporters of KM champion (reference group or steering committee)
- Senior leadership buy-in

KM strategy

- A KM strategy is a plan that describes how a municipality will manage its knowledge better.
- It refers to the entire process of developing and evaluating a KM implementation plan, including continuous adapting and monitoring of the plan to improve municipal performance.
- A KM strategy should be closely aligned to the municipality's broader strategy.

Components of a KM strategy

- Establish principles
- Identify the strategic objectives
- Identify KM activities
- Do a gap analysis
- Outline core KM aspects
- Identify potential problems

Knowledge assessment

- A knowledge assessment maps out what knowledge and information exists, the gaps, and where knowledge flows need to be improved to address the municipality's developmental goals.
- It answers the question: how does the municipality assess, acquire, build, learn, contribute and use knowledge.
- It may look at knowledge assets (identifies knowledge products and content) and knowledge flows (shows existing knowledge sharing patterns and gaps using flowcharts or maps that highlight bottlenecks).
- A knowledge assessment is also called a **knowledge audit** or a **knowledge scoping** exercise.

Components of a knowledge assessment

- Identify stakeholders
- Build trust with stakeholders
- Determine assessment outputs
- Design data collection and collect data - *From knowledge owners and users, from tangible knowledge assets, from observation of how knowledge is being used in real situations*

KM implementation plan

A KM implementation plan is the practical manifestation of a KM strategy. It details what will be done, when and by whom. It should be simple, user-friendly, flexible and include evaluation.

Components:

- Discuss incentives
- Include evaluation
- Allocate resources
- Identify KM people

SECTION

Tools



Tools - icons



Individual use



Collaborative use



Sharing knowledge



Learning knowledge

20 KM tools

- After Action Review (AAR)
- Brainstorming
- Briefings
- Communities of Practice
- Conferences and seminars
- Directory of Experts
- Exit interviews
- Good practice
- IT-based tools
- Knowledge Fairs
- Lessons learned
- Mentoring
- Partnerships
- Peer assist
- Peer coaching
- Publications
- Social media
- Story telling
- Study tours and delegations
- Training programmes

SECTION



Glossary &
Further Resources