



**PROPOSED COUNTY KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (KM)  
MODEL OFFICE**



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## Introduction and Background to the Proposal

Research shows that governments at different levels are adopting tools and applications to improve service delivery, increase coordination, and quickly respond to the rapid changes in the environment. Knowledge is increasingly being recognized as a core strategic asset in sound governance and better and more cost-effective service delivery, which calls for more systematic capture, sharing and application of knowledge in organisations.

Devolution was introduced to bring services closer to the citizens of Kenya. As a result, there is a demand for better service delivery by citizens, which calls for County Governments to continuously seek new ways and methods of improving operations, particularly in the context of constrained resources. There is also increased pressure for Counties to enhance transparency and accountability in their operations. By documenting and sharing service delivery solutions and innovations, Counties can open up and facilitate learning across peers. Knowledge Management practices connect people with relevant information and knowledge.

This proposal seeks to provide a minimum standard for Counties to set up KM offices/units and systematically run them, for maximum effectiveness and efficiency, quality decision-making and service delivery.

County governments generate and receive large amounts of data and information, and KM is one of the new management processes being adopted to transform this data and information into relevant knowledge for quality decision-making to improve service delivery.

### Justification for a County KM Office

A study by Ndiege and Wamuyu (2019) to investigate the current knowledge management practices and technological solutions employed by County Governments revealed the main local challenges hindering the effective utilization of knowledge, including the lack of systematic knowledge management practices in existence within the surveyed County Governments. The few existing KM practices were isolated, informal and uncoordinated, and were neither documented nor communicated. The existing policy frameworks to support knowledge management practices were inadequate, and relevant technological solutions tailored to support knowledge management practices were scarce.

Successful institutionalization of KM is dependent on top management buy-in, development of learning and KM policies, modelling usage of the knowledge, and giving incentives to staff who use knowledge, thus establishing a KM culture. ICT is a KM enabler that facilitates faster knowledge gathering, sharing and storing. County staff (KM and non-KM) are the most critical success factor in a KM initiative as they create or acquire the knowledge and process and share it for use in decision-making.

In early 2021, the CoG Maarifa Centre conducted a County Knowledge Management Capability Assessment Survey with County Executives and concluded that Counties were ripe to establish KM Offices to institutionalize KM at the County level in a systematic and integrated manner.

**Below are the findings and the gaps that the KM Office will fill.**

**KM Governance.** It is encouraging that 80.6% of the respondents noted that KM goals and strategies are embedded in the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) but some 35% of the respondents indicated that KM is not anchored in the county systems. A KM Office would ensure KM structures are in place.

**KM Performance Management & Recognition.** While a rewarding culture for knowledge sharing and reuse is a proven way to promote a KM culture in organisations, it seems not to be ingrained in most Counties as only 16% have a very visible rewarding culture for knowledge sharing and reuse. Only 24% of Counties strongly recognise and value intellectual assets. A KM Office would harness the assets and proactively share them with those who need them.

**KM Technical Skills.** About 37.4% of the Counties lacked a trained Technical Staff on KM. Only 27% of the Counties run training and development programmes in KM on recruitment. Counties use back-to-office reports and photography to capture knowledge. Counties are encouraged to use standard templates proposed in the CoG's Maarifa [Handbook for County Government on Knowledge Capturing and Sharing](#) to make it easier for knowledge exchange within and among Counties. There is a need for a policy directive toward the use of this template. A KM Office would conduct training on the identification, capturing, documentation and sharing of county knowledge.

While the majority of departments have a structured flow of information, about 17% of Counties do not. A KM Office will enhance communication by providing technological tools and solutions that enable integrated communication.

Internal information is predominantly shared through meetings (91%), emails (86%) and WhatsApp (86%). There is a need to leverage the use of other social media sites such as Facebook (30%) and Twitter (15%) to share information in real-time with the departments/County Governments. County websites are the most used (93%) for sharing knowledge products externally, followed by WhatsApp (67%), the Annual Devolution Conference (64%) and public barazas (meetings (62%). There is improved service delivery within departments because of knowledge sharing as attested by 95% of respondents than between/among Counties (39%).

To avoid reinventing the wheel and/or exhausting scarce resources, Counties should through their KM Offices enhance knowledge exchange and pool resources to achieve more.

Sector experts or experienced employees mostly prefer discussion forums and informal groups (79%) as the medium for knowledge sharing. Other notable avenues used include coaching and mentorship (59%) and trainings (56%). This is commendable and needs to be strengthened given the 'new normal' virtual working environment, to include more online sharing. A KM Office would link new staff with the experts for a quick transfer of skills and knowledge.

There is a need for more peer-to-peer knowledge sharing among Counties, given that only 35.7% use high-level inter-county meetings and 28.7% use inter-county peer learning forums. About 42% have no systematic peer review mechanism. County KM Offices are best placed to organize these intercounty knowledge-sharing events.

Only 47% of Counties have a committee akin to a KM Steering Committee to support KM focal persons by monitoring, advising and ensuring improved information collection and sharing. A KM Office structure must include a County Knowledge and Best Practices Advisory Committee to ensure that the County only shares with other Counties its best or most beneficial experiences.

**KM Systems and Platforms.** Use of technology for KM in Counties is high at 68% for documentation and 73% for sharing. There is, however, low use (46%) in multidisciplinary teams' collaboration. Less than 50% of Counties have invested in ICT platforms and equipment for knowledge capturing and sharing, pointing to a need for Counties to invest in KM infrastructure to effectively use the virtual space in its KM activities for faster and wider reach, and improved service delivery. A KM Office will provide an ICT-based platform and training to enhance these collaborative activities.

**KM Resources.** Some 39% of the Counties have no database for storing knowledge. Just about 53% maintain databases of projects/programmes by other stakeholders and institutions, more than they maintain databases of their existing and possible new knowledge, practices and innovations (50%). There are few good practice documents and/or databases, 33%; experience documents and/or databases, 22%; innovation documents and/or databases 21%; and expert databases, 18%. All these sectoral/departmental knowledge databases need to be integrated and managed by the KM Office.

While most Counties rely on employee expert knowledge, e.g. employees' contacts and linkages (71%), this information is not documented and when such employees leave, the information is lost. The KM Office will maintain an expert database, and gather as much tacit information from seasoned employees as possible.

Counties have various repositories which are housed in different places. However, they are hardly used as staff find the information, they need to perform their work through a wide array of sources, including the internet (70%); national government websites (62%); networks of experts and friends (59%); COG (56%) and others. They consulted other Counties less (43%) and rarely consulted libraries, think tanks, and Maarifa Centre. A KM Office would proactively provide the information needed at the convenience of its users, for ease of access, and to ensure that they are managed by skilled KM professionals.

**KM Needs.** Counties admitted to facing numerous challenges in KM efforts, key among them, the lack of a KM policy/strategy (70%); lack of professional KM staff (67%); no defined responsibilities and budget for KM initiatives (59%) and others. Duplication of efforts across departments affected 50% of the Counties, probably because there were no systems to facilitate effective communication across departments (52%). These needs would be best handled within the KM Office activities and budget.

**KM Success Stories.** Counties have numerous success stories but most are not documented properly.

**The Assessment report made these conclusions and recommendations:**

While the majority of the Counties are willing to promote KM (76%), only 22% have commissioned a County KM Strategy. There is a need for all Counties to come up with KM

strategies and dedicated staff, and sufficient budgets for KM activities. About 58% of Counties said they provide a budget for KM capturing and sharing activities.

Counties are encouraged to use standard templates proposed in the CoG's Maarifa Handbook for County Government on Knowledge Capturing and Sharing to make it easier for knowledge exchange within and among Counties.

There is a need for Counties to leverage the opportunity offered by Maarifa Centre as a source of knowledge and expertise to build their own knowledge hubs, the KM Offices.

Besides, access to information is a human right enshrined in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. And for citizens and development partners, it enhances transparency and accountability for informed decision-making and investment. A KM Office would strengthen County operations, systems and networks/processes to achieve this level of service.

A KM Office would curate the County's institutional memory beyond the five-year transitions.

## **Focus of the KM Office**

The focus of the County KM Office will be to support County departments in systematically identifying, capturing, documenting and sharing county knowledge with staff, the local community and other Counties and stakeholders, for quality decision-making and improvement of service delivery.

## **Targeted beneficiaries and Stakeholders for this initiative**

The following groups are the key players in harnessing County knowledge and increasing the flow of information and knowledge to communities in Counties.

Local communities and citizens. Citizen participation is enshrined in the Constitution. Local communities need to be involved in determining their development programs and in the allocation of available resources. Communities also hold indigenous knowledge which Counties must harness and integrate with scientific knowledge for effective and sustainable solutions to local problems. County Governments need to work with indigenous knowledge holders to digitize the knowledge for the current and future generations.

**County Government staff** — as they discharge their duties, they generate massive information. In the course of implementing policies, plans, programs and projects, County staff hold a wealth of knowledge worth sharing with other Counties and the public at large.

**National Government.** The National Government is a key partner in county development as both levels of government serve the same citizens, and therefore, they need to have synergy.

**Development partners/donors, private sector, media, academia, civil society organizations** and the scientific community are key beneficiaries of knowledge generated at the County level. This is because they partner with Counties to provide financial, technical and material support in the implementation of CIDPs.

Availability of data and information will help these stakeholders in decision-making for their investments.

## Operationalization of the KM Office

For effective uptake and integration of KM in Counties, affirmative action is necessary. Counties will decide on the most strategic department to domicile the KM Unit, provided all departments are properly sensitized to ensure staff get involved in KM in the County and look at the KM Office as one highlighting their success stories, innovations and best practices. The KM Unit will be manned by a trained KM Officer who will work closely with the County Communications Officer, County M&E Officer and KM Champions from all departments.

During validation of this document, it emerged that Counties have different organizational structures, which influenced their choice of the most appropriate office, depending on its influence, to domicile the KM Office. Some of the proposed offices included the Office of the County Secretary, the Service Delivery Unit, the Governor's Delivery Unit, the Department of Public Service & Administration, the Department of Finance & Planning, and the Department of Finance (Directorate of M&E).

## Staffing:

There should be dedicated officers to do the writeups and short videos for the KM stories.

- ✓ **County KM Officer** — Counties should consider employing a full-time qualified and experienced KM Officer to be in charge of the documentation with support from the Communication, M&E officers and KM Champions from all departments (See Annex 2 for the suggested ToR for the County KM Officer).
- ✓ **County Communications Officer** — should support the KM Officer to amplify evidence of performance in a structured way through good writing, analytical skills, video capture and editing (give an average of 40% of their time).
- ✓ **County M&E Officer** — should identify evidence of performance worth documenting and sharing with the KM Officer for documentation (give an average of 40% of their time).
- ✓ **KM champions** — drawn from each department to support the KM Officer to help colleagues to do KM effectively.

## Other requirements:

### These may already be available in Counties.

- ✓ Computers
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Video-editing App
- ✓ External hard disk

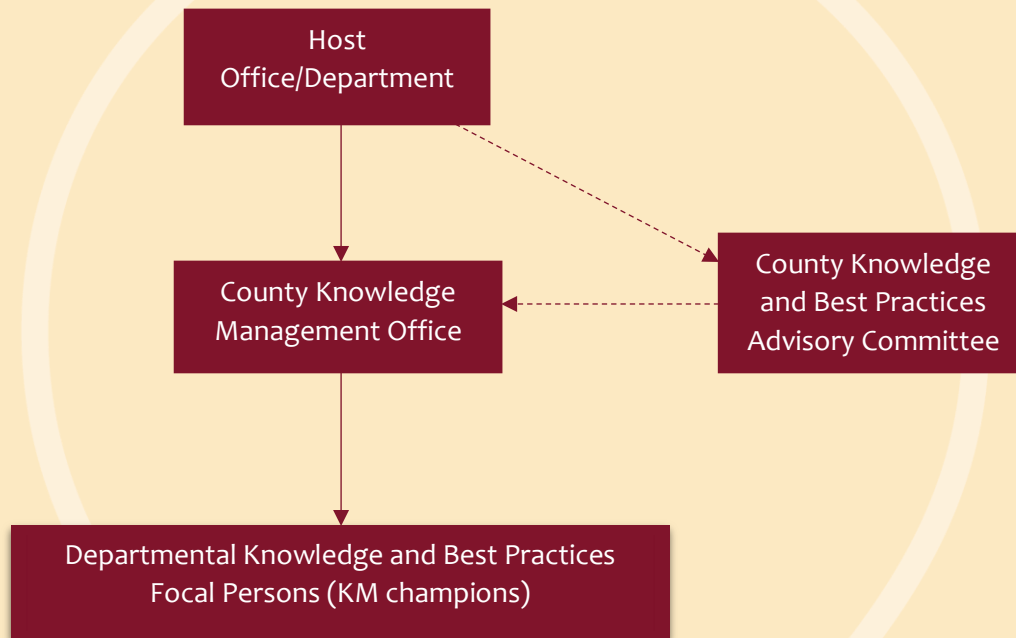
Budget line for the KM function in every department and the KM Office

NB. For staff buy-in, it will be important to involve all staff from the beginning. All departments should be properly sensitized to ensure respective staff get involved in KM in the County and look at the KM Office as one highlighting their innovations and best practices. Staff induction on video capture and writing using the Maarifa Centre template can help standardize the documentation.

## Conclusion

Establishing a County KM Office is value for money and a necessary investment to help manage the huge amounts of information that Counties handle. The budget for setting up a KM Office will depend on the size, number and qualifications of the staff, type of building, equipment and furniture, and other factors. Most development partners would fund such an initiative since it provides benefits to them as well. The Maarifa Centre will walk with Counties that want to establish KM Offices.

## Annexe 1: Suggested Organogram for the County KM Office



## Annexe 2: Suggested Terms of Reference for the County Knowledge Management Officer

### Background

The County Knowledge Management Officer is a full-time role charged with the implementation of the KM function at the County level.

### Functional competencies:

- ✓ Demonstrates integrity and ethical standards;
- ✓ Ability to work under pressure and deliver high-quality results on time;
- ✓ Mature judgment, initiative and independence;
- ✓ Strong interpersonal skills, communication, networking and team-building skills; competent in leading teams and creating team spirit, management of inter-group dynamics and conflicting interests of various actors, and stimulating team members to produce quality knowledge outputs in a timely and transparent fashion.
- ✓ Fluency in written English and Kiswahili is essential.



## Core skills:

Analytic capacity and demonstrated ability to process analyse and synthesise complex, technical information from different disciplines simply and clearly;

Proven ability to support the development of high-quality knowledge and training materials, as well as audio-visual communications products.

Researching, interviewing, note-taking and reporting, and workshop planning and facilitation skills.

## Roles and responsibilities

The County KM Officer is a role model for continuous learning and promotes the sharing and preservation of knowledge across the Departments and special task teams.

## Specific roles and responsibilities

- ✓ Provide guidance and input into the County Knowledge Management strategy.
- ✓ Establish and improve the KM processes in the County.
- ✓ Ensure the County has processes and tools for identifying knowledge assets that will be valuable across the County, gathering and making them available for County-wide use and sharing them with other Counties for learning.
- ✓ Ensure that there are processes and tools for lessons learnt to be captured in an accessible format and disseminated to the right people and repositories.
- ✓ Budget adequately for County KM activities and submit for approval/allocation.
- ✓ Act in the role of a facilitator or core activist for KM initiatives in the County/Department/Unit/Sector or Community of Practice (CoP) and is the go-to person for KM issues.
- ✓ Facilitate knowledge-sharing activities and sessions within and possibly across the County Department/Unit/Sector or CoP, and within projects and with other Counties.
- ✓ Ensure that the units, departments or projects within the County create and/or maintain databases for their unique knowledge assets and experts.
- ✓ Identify experts within County projects/departments/units, and then help draw their knowledge out for others to learn from, using the expertise transfer techniques they have been taught.
- ✓ Act as a knowledge broker/matchmaker/mediator /liaison within the County and between the County and other Counties or the CoG Maarifa Centre.
- ✓ Organise peer-learning activities, KM awards and other initiatives to motivate and reward colleagues (as individuals or departments) who have embraced the KM culture.
- ✓ Work with the overall County Knowledge Champion and departmental Knowledge Champions to sensitize staff on knowledge management; review and audit/self-assess the knowledge process and its techniques and methods.
- ✓ Work with the overall County Knowledge Champion and departmental Knowledge Champions to prepare or support colleagues in the documentation of new or existing knowledge.
- ✓ Respond to knowledge queries and feedback from colleagues.

- ✓ Provide ongoing support and training for County colleagues in knowledge-sharing techniques (could adopt the Maarifa Centre KM training module or arrange with the Maarifa Centre to provide the training).
- ✓ Request changes and additions to the Knowledge Management System via the change management process.
- ✓ Monitor/Evaluate KM activities and report on KM performance metrics.
- ✓ Provide other relevant support work requested by senior County management related to knowledge management, communications and outreach.

## **Annexe 3: Suggested Terms of Reference for County/Departmental Knowledge Champions**

### **Background**

To support the County KM Officer, the overall County Knowledge Champion and Departmental Knowledge Champions perform those KM roles relating to coaching, supporting and brokering.

The primary role of the overall County Knowledge Champion is to help colleagues to do KM effectively. Getting management to appoint departmental Knowledge Champions will help entrench the KM culture faster.

Counties that take a long time to recruit KM Officers will find the KM champions useful in running the KM agenda.

### **Specific roles and responsibilities of County/Departmental KM Champions**

- ✓ Help provide guidance and input into the County Knowledge Management strategy.
- ✓ Help establish and improve the KM processes in the County.
- ✓ Act as a KM advocate, catalyst and change agent to promote knowledge-sharing techniques and KM culture, e.g. through targeted events to spread the use of knowledge-sharing techniques.
- ✓ Work with the County Knowledge Management Officer to sensitize staff on knowledge management; review and audit/self-assess the knowledge process and its techniques and methods.
- ✓ Work with the County Knowledge Management Officer to prepare or support colleagues in the documentation of new or existing knowledge.
- ✓ Respond to knowledge queries and feedback from colleagues.
- ✓ Ensure departmental/unit/project targets for documentation of knowledge are reached for the quality and quantity of knowledge.
- ✓ Advocate for adequate budget for County KM activities.
- ✓ Work with the County Knowledge Management Officer to organise peer-learning activities, KM awards and other initiatives to motivate and reward colleagues (as individuals or departments) who have embraced the KM culture.

### **Qualities to look for in a Knowledge Champion**

- ✓ A good knowledge champion:
- ✓ is charismatic and can respectfully influence colleagues to embrace change.
- ✓ knows when to take the lead and when to relinquish control to others who are experts in their fields.

- ✓ shares knowledge and communicates effectively, e.g. they can explain KM in ways that make sense to their peers and colleagues.
- ✓ well-respected by colleagues and can network across the County and beyond
- ✓ helpful and approachable.
- ✓ proactive problem-solver.
- ✓ task-oriented and strives to continuously improve, e.g. can help identify new ways to document knowledge.
- ✓ produces knowledge that others want to use.
- ✓ culturally sensitive.
- ✓ sees the big picture, e.g. can demonstrate the value of knowledge management to the County leadership.

## How to keep Knowledge Champions motivated

While the County/Departmental Knowledge Champion's job is to keep other knowledge workers motivated, the County management needs to foster an environment that supports the Knowledge Champions and keeps them motivated:

- ✓ Clearly define the Knowledge Champion's responsibilities and how much time to devote to the role.
- ✓ Provide visible management support, such as adequate budget and infrastructure, regular update meetings, KM award scheme, and access to members of the senior County management.
- ✓ Give them the autonomy to develop the role and balance it with their regular duties.
- ✓ Recognize them for their efforts, for example, in their annual review, with special awards that are announced county-wide and with learning opportunities.

NB. Supporting the KM Officer and the Knowledge Champions in their implementation efforts can go a long way in maintaining a vibrant knowledge program that involves all employees. Both the KM Officer and the Champions are to be supported by a County Knowledge and Best Practices Advisory Committee.

## Annexe 3: Suggested Terms of Reference for a County Knowledge and Best Practices Advisory Committee (as suggested in the Handbook for County Governments on Knowledge Capturing and Sharing)

A County Knowledge and Best Practices Advisory Committee is a useful mechanism to support the identification, documentation, validation and dissemination of best practices and innovations, to ensure that the County only shares with other Counties, its best or most beneficial experiences. Ideally, each County should have an apex steering committee linked to the Governor's Office, and knowledge sub-committees/teams at the departmental level. The apex committee's members should be drawn from all departments, while the smaller departmental teams should have members drawn from specific units. The responsibilities of the steering committee include some or all of the following elements:

- ✓ Overseeing the institutionalisation of knowledge management in the County;
- ✓ Overseeing the adaptation and operationalisation of the Handbook for County Governments on Knowledge Capturing and Sharing;
- ✓ Guiding departments in the identification and documentation of best practices;

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- ✓ Providing review and guidance in validating County best practices;
- ✓ Ensuring that departments have identified knowledge focal points and resources required for their role;
- ✓ Lobbying for resources in the County budget to cover knowledge capturing and sharing, as well as participation in knowledge forums; and
- ✓ Supporting and regularly briefing the County leadership on all knowledge-sharing issues.
- ✓ Ensuring alignment of the County KM policies with the national one where necessary.

## Advisory Committee Membership

- 🔗 County Secretary (Chair)
- 🔗 Chief Officer for Finance & Planning
- 🔗 All County Directors of Departments
- 🔗 KM Officer (Secretary)
- 🔗 County Communications Officer
- 🔗 County M&E Officer



COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

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