KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION (K2A)

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IDB

Inter-American Development Bank

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Knowledge to Action (K2A): Knowledge Distillation and Dissemination

Introduction

A disciplined approach to "Learn from Experience" is critical to the enduring ability of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and its regional partners to make effective knowledge-based decisions and optimize development outcomes. In order to achieve the desired results, learning before, during, and after everything we do must be 'part of the way we work' at the IDB -not something extra.

The IDB has developed several methodological tools that will help Bank personnel and their regional stakeholders identify, capture, and as applicable, share their knowledge for re-use by others. As shown in Figure 1, these methods to mainstream learning from our individual and collective experience in every phase of our project cycle (and other key operational processes) include the Peer Assist,[1] In Action Review,[2] Knowledge Capture Interview,[3] and After Action Review.[4]

Knowledge captured using these methods can be analyzed and organized using the 'Knowledge to Action' methodology, which produces and organizes actionable 'Key Learnings' for re-use by their target audience(s). Key Learnings captured from individual projects can help teams solve current operational challenges and improve performance indicators. The cumulative capture of Key Learnings from multiple projects in a specific country, (sub-)sector, or business process allow for the compilation and validation of a critical mass of relevant knowledge, which can be disseminated effectively through an integrated online knowledge base and/or be leveraged to develop or update training or other capacity building efforts.

This way, the IDB can ensure practitioners are able to take advantage of what has been done and learned before in IDB operations, and make effective decisions based on the latest available knowledge.
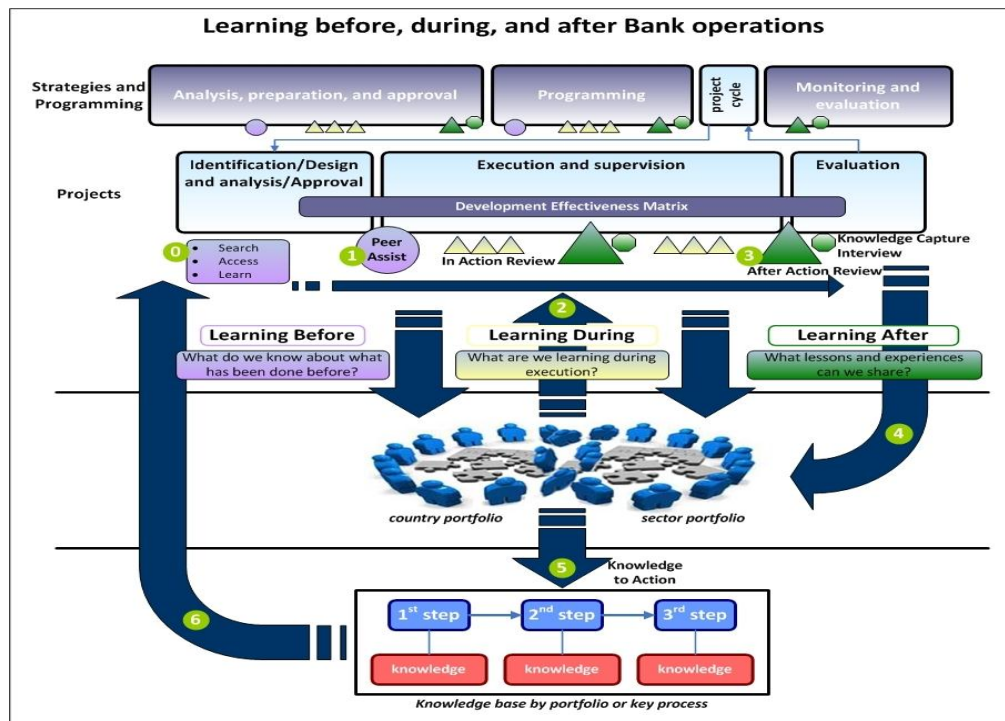
Figure 1. Learning from project experience -before, during and after

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[1] For more information see Peer Assist, Inter-American Development Bank, 2012.

[2] For more information see In Action Review, Inter-American Development Bank, 2012.

[3] For more information see Knowledge Capture Interview, Inter-American Development Bank, 2012.

[4] For more information see After Action Review, Inter-American Development Bank, 2012.

What is K2A?

'Knowledge to Action' is a process to analyze, organize, and disseminate knowledge in a way that makes it easier to access and re-use for its target audience. The K2A method consists of the analysis of existing knowledge products (technical notes, case studies, policy briefs, etc.) or of newly captured knowledge (insights and experience) from projects, processes, or knowledge and learning events (e.g. conferences, presentations), with the aim of extracting and organizing Key Learnings for dissemination through an online knowledge base (and other media, as applicable).

A Key Learning provides in a single sentence a clear recommended action for the knowledge re-user to consider in response to a specific practical question or challenge, and is presented in context to help the user quickly and effectively assess its relevance to the specific situation he or she is currently facing. For example:

> *"Involve teachers in the design process of any merit pay system being considered and ensure they have the opportunity to provide feedback to assuage fairness and transparency concerns, because teacher support is critical to the system's prospects for sustainability."*

Key Learnings don't simply recommend you what to do, they help you think differently about what you are about to do by explaining *why, how, or in what circumstances the knowledge is relevant and applicable*. Each Key Learning is linked to the knowledge source from which it was derived. Key Learnings are organized by topic and sub-topic (or process) to make them easier to find and re-use as part of the target audience's decision making process.
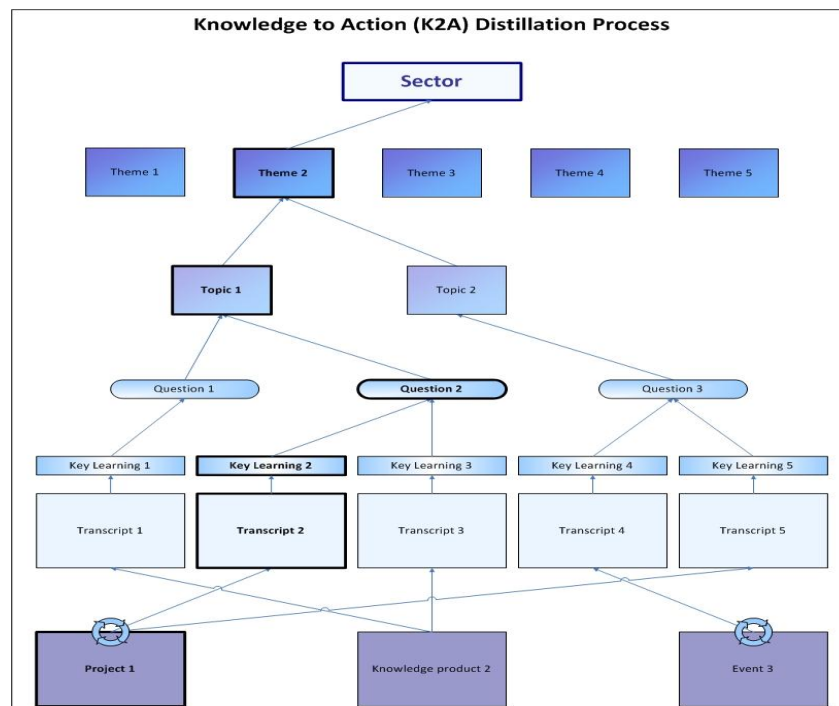

Figure 2. Distilling Key Learnings from projects, knowledge products, or events.[5]

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[5] For an example of a practical application, see Annex A.

What is the value added of the K2A process?

Simply put, the express purpose of K2A process is knowledge dissemination, to enable its *re-use* by the intended target audience to support decision making and promote better decisions, performance, and results. This means that the disseminated knowledge has to be more than just accurate, current and relevant: It has to be *actionable*. What's more, the knowledge needs of users are diverse, always evolving, and specific to moments and situations -and all this in an environment where time is everyone's most precious resource.

Whether you're trying to improve performance on projects or help build capacity in key stakeholders based on the latest available knowledge, K2A is a model for *targeted* knowledge dissemination that closes the learning loop and allows users to get access quickly to the precise knowledge they need when they need it, so that they can immediately apply this knowledge as part of the way they work.

What are the K2A deliverables and how can I use them?

The principal deliverable from this 'Knowledge to Action' process is an interactive and easily accessible online knowledge base that presents relevant Key Learnings in their context, organized by topic and linked back to their source, so that the target audience(s) can more easily identify the knowledge that is most relevant to them and at the level of detail they need (see Annex A). Your target audience(s) may be inside the Bank, outside of it, or both.

You can use this structured online knowledge base of Key Learnings to:

- Improve current and future Bank operations;

- Develop or update training to close the learning loop on your key projects and operational activities to ensure that new projects are always able to take advantage of the latest relevant 'know how';

- Integrate and link together all your knowledge content (documents, web links, videos, newsletters, events, blogs, projects etc.) in a single place;

- Identify emerging trends (or knowledge gaps) in an area of interest (focus on what is relevant right now);

- Quickly communicate key messages to your key stakeholders;

- Highlight new effective practices that can be further disseminated through conference presentations, newsletters, or other media;

- Seed community or portfolio discussions to deepen stakeholder engagement on a particular issue; and

- Serve as source material that cuts across different experiences and contexts (sectors, countries or, projects) for the development of new knowledge products (e.g. Case Study) on a specific topic.

How do I get started with K2A and what support is available?

Based on your target audience(s) and desired outcomes, the starting point for K2A is the identification and prioritization of relevant sources of your knowledge. These sources can range from existing knowledge products, to learning from individuals or teams participating in projects or corporate activities, to the expertise of internal or external experts participating in learning events.

For an overview of the entire K2A process, see Figure 3.

		Project or Event	Existing knowledge products
Plan	1	Identify priorities (sector, topic, country, process) and target audience(s)	
capture	2	Prepare knowledge capture activity	Collect and assess knowledge documentation
	3	Conduct knowledge capture	Prioritize knowledge documentation
Distill	4	Extract key knowledge transcripts	
	5	Develop actionable recommendations (Key Learnings)	
	6	Organize key learnings in topics, sub-topics, and by questions	
	7	Conduct quality review on organized knowledge content	
disseminate	8	Prepare knowledge content for online dissemination (incl. linking with related resources)	
	9	Engage stakeholders and keep knowledge base current	

Figure 3. K2A process by knowledge source.

The KNL team is available to provide in-depth methodological, technological infrastructure (and potentially financial) support to organizational units interested in learning from their experience and disseminating their Key Learnings inside and/or outside the Bank. KNL can assist the unit in identifying its relevant knowledge sources, capturing/collecting prioritized knowledge content, distilling (analyzing and organizing) Key Learnings, and disseminating the resulting actionable knowledge content to its target audience(s).

For more information, please contact KNL/KNM at aprenderdelaexperiencia@iadb.org

K2A—Learning from a Project Example:
Juventud y Empleo, Dominican Republic

Capture

Client Project and K2A Methodology

Location: Dominican Republic

Challenge: LMK partners with KNL to identify valuable insights and experiences as the team transition from one phase to the next in a key youth employment project to make actionable knowledge available for future projects and for the region

Methodology:

• Knowledge Capture Interviews with key stakeholders: Ministry of Labor, National Training Agency, Training Institutes, and Employers
• Focus group with young people who have participated in the program

Distill

Analyze and Organize

• KNL analyzes and formulates knowledge captured from stakeholders into a concise, actionable format that your team or partners can leverage to improve future or ongoing projects
• Outputs are delivered as key learnings and organized to meet client needs (i.e., thematically, geographically, by process)
• Key learnings are linked to the source from which they are derived and are framed as direct answers to questions that can help somebody who is facing a practical challenge

Disseminate

Deliverables

• **Product:** KNL provides clients with key learnings similar to these examples:

Question: What are some factors to keep in mind based on experiences from job programs around the region?

• **Key Learning:** Establish clear rules and expectations about whether and how businesses will pay interns—some do and some don't—so that participants know what to expect on payday.
• **Key Learning:** Recognize the importance of placing interested participants in job training courses and internships quickly, because in some areas young people move frequently and delays in their admission can result in them slipping through the cracks after a move and not being able to participate

• Deliverables include an accessible interactive online knowledge base. The key learnings can also be used to create knowledge additional products (e.g. case studies, technical notes, etc.), or used to source other dissemination or publication formats (web stories, presentations etc.).

Juventud y Empleo, Dominican Republic

• The IDB has been working with the government of the Dominican Republic on its ongoing Juventud y Empleo program since 2001. The program provides job training services to unemployed young people between the ages of 16 and 29, primarily in peri-urban areas. The program targets young people who have not completed their secondary education.
• The Labor Ministry tenders the Juventud y Empleo training courses out to the Training Institutes, which recruit potentially eligible young people and are overseen by INFOTEP. Employers participating in the Juventud y Empleo program guarantee a two-month internship for program graduates.

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