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SmartLessons

real experiences, real development

A Roadmap for Tracking Knowledge Results – Experiences and Challenges



From fostering expertise to packaging and sharing lessons from the field, the knowledge work of the World Bank Group takes many shapes. But unlike lending operations, knowledge work is not always subject to the same results monitoring processes. For example, the publishing of a report has often been used as the only indicator of a successful knowledge product. During a program-wide effort to develop and implement a results-based management framework for its technical assistance work, the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), a multi-donor partnership administered by the World Bank, discovered that applying the same framework to its knowledge work helped demonstrate the value of knowledge by drawing a connection between knowledge inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact. This SmartLesson describes lessons from a technical assistance program's experience applying a results framework to knowledge work. In addition to demonstrating value, this helped better define different stages of knowledge work, measure progress, and better manage program communications and knowledge management.

Background

In 2008, WSP began to develop a program-wide results framework to articulate the results from the technical assistance provided to the 24 countries where it works. Central to WSP's mandate is providing water and sanitation knowledge and thought leadership to sector constituents. Given how critical harnessing and delivering knowledge is for WSP, a component was included in the results framework to explicate the outputs and indicators that support the program's knowledge work. The following are some of the key lessons learned from WSP's experience:

Lessons Learned

1) Incorporate communications and knowledge work early in the design of a results framework.

After delving into the development of the knowledge component of the results framework, staff identified many activities related to communications that naturally fit into the knowledge work of the program. For example, one of the primary roles of communications staff was to disseminate knowledge products to external audiences. As the framework developed, it became

evident that communications and knowledge management are not, and should not be independent of one another. Rather, for a comprehensive approach, it was necessary to position one as a function of the other.

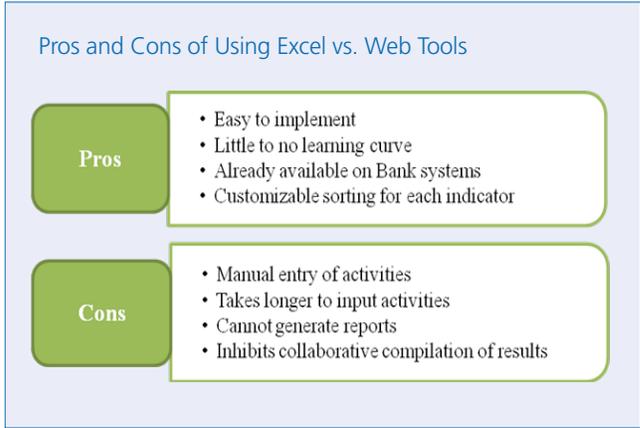
To this end WSP identified a knowledge objective - to strengthen the sector knowledge and advocacy to improve water and sanitation services for poor people - and then identified four outputs that supported this objective: knowledge generation, dissemination, evaluation, and advocacy (See Figure 1).

Although this component of the framework gained traction among management, it was challenging at first to gain program-wide acceptance because its development had occurred separately from that of WSP's overall results framework.

2) The framework is evolutionary and iterative.

Through discussions and brainstorming with staff from each region, WSP identified various indicators of progress in the four outputs. Some of the indicators track purely quantitative data, such as the number of visitors to WSP's web site, the number of views on WSP's YouTube channel, or the number of "re-tweets" from WSP's Twitter stream. Other indicators were a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, such as "number of sector interventions identified that use or were influenced by WSP knowledge." Having identified the four outputs, WSP began a soft rollout of the results framework. It was clear as implementation began that the results framework would continue to evolve as staff began using it. Not only did the framework continue to evolve, but it was also adaptable for regions, if warranted. For example, in Latin America, a results champion worked with staff to develop a manageable set of indicators relevant specifically for that region. With a results framework that better reflected their work, staff there almost immediately began regular contributions to tracking indicators.

The results framework also needed to evolve as new technologies and methods were implemented in WSP. For example, Twitter indicators were absent from the first version of the framework, but as WSP began to increase its focus on social media, it has added five indicators related to Twitter, such as number of followers and re-tweets.



3) Learn to walk before you run.

Having the right tools matters but start with the basics. Once the initial results framework was developed, WSP turned to tracking the indicators, which were created in consultation with staff. A results "tracker" was developed as an Excel spreadsheet (see Figure 2) and staff time was dedicated to track these indicators.

WSP staff learned that just as the framework is an iterative document, the tracking mechanism is as well. Complicated and expensive websites or instruments were not necessary to get started. Keeping it simple allows for enhancements to be made until it is ready for migration to a more robust platform.

Once staff began adding information to the tracker consistently, maintaining it in Excel grew challenging in terms of time spent entering the information. At this stage, it may prove helpful to explore other options such as an online database that staff can access to input data and monitor progress.

4) To demonstrate knowledge-sharing results, it's necessary to invest in tracking.

Investing in a "results framework" does not necessarily require financial resources. Time is perhaps the most valuable investment WSP made for the development of the knowledge portion of the results framework.

Figure 1: Knowledge portion of results framework

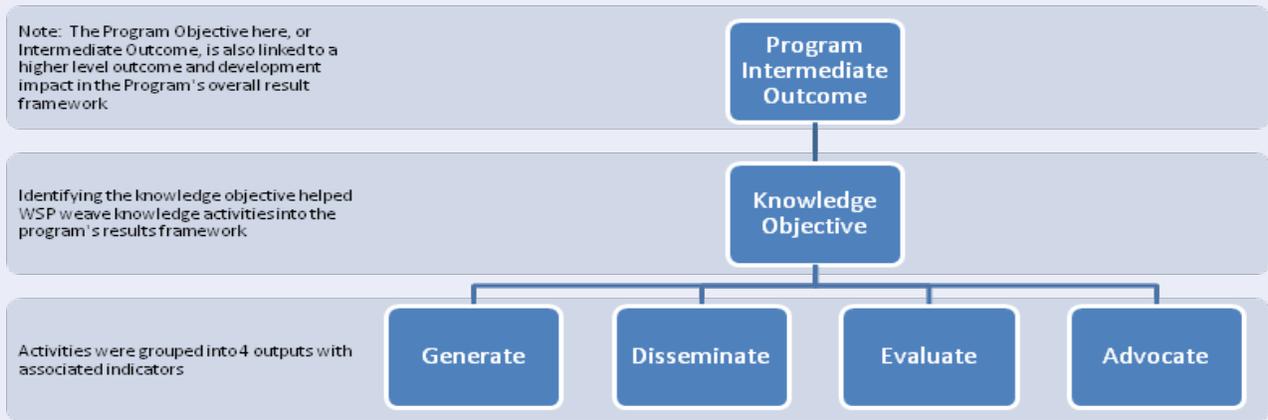


Figure 2: A screenshot of the WSP Results Tracker

| Output #4: Advocate | | | | |
|--|---|---|------|------------|
| 3. Number of times WSP engages with strategic partners to disseminate knowledge and messages | | | | |
| Organization | Purpose for Contact | Contact Info | Date | |
| Bloomberg | Hosting World Bank Water and Sanitation Program IBNET | DUSTIN JOOSTE djooste1@bloomberg.net | | |
| BuildGreen | http://www.buildgreen.ae (October Publication feature on Water Management) | Email: ben@cpidubai.com http://www.buildgreen.ae | | 9/1/2010 |
| Practical Action | http://www.practicalactionpublishing.org (Disseminate WSP Knowledge through their site) | Clare.Tawney@practicalaction.org.uk | | 10/3/2010 |
| IFC | http://smartlessons.ifc.org/smartlessons/ | smartlessons@ifc.org | | 12/1/2010 |
| Water Advocates | http://www.wateradvocates.org (Briefing) | jsauer@wateradvocates.org | | 11/19/2010 |
| British Library for Development Studies | http://www.wsp.org/UserFiles/file/global_goodsewerscheap.pdf (Citing WSP knowledge in Academia) | j.brookes@ids.ac.uk | | 12/22/2010 |
| Google Scholar | scholar.google.com (Disseminate WSP Knowledge through GS) | http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=70896&cbid=11f81ki49tncb&src=cb&lev=%20answer | | 1/1/2011 |
| WB - Development Economics | N:\TWIWP\Comms\Results Framework\Output 4 Documents (Approached by DEC for the Global Monitoring Report) | Sachin Shahria/Person/World Bank | | 2/7/2011 |
| CSIS - WSP Event: The Economic Impacts of Inadequate Sanitation in India | http://csis.org/event/economic-impacts-inadequate-sanitation-india (Discussion on ESI India Study) | Katryn Bowe at kbowe@csis.org. | | 2/11/2011 |
| Water Sector Board | http://wbwater.worldbank.org/water/events/world-bank-water-days-innovation-water (World Bank Water Days - Innovation in Water) | Hywon Cha Kim | | 1/31/2011 |
| USAID Merri Weinger Program Manager, Hygiene Improvement | Beyond tippy-taps: The role of enabling products in scaling up and sustaining handwashing Jacqueline Devine, Senior Social Marketing Specialist, World Bank/Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) will share learning from WSP's Global Scaling Up Handwashing Project in the area of enabling products. (Sanitation Working Group) | Weinger, Merri MWeinger@usaid.gov, Jacqueline Devine | | 1/11/2011 |

The communications and knowledge management team spent roughly five to seven hours a week for six weeks mapping out WSP's activities, grouping them into emerging categories, and identifying indicators and responsible parties for each, giving the framework a strong foundation to build on.

The group also benefited from meetings with a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, who had worked on WSP's overall framework. The list of carefully identified activities and indicators were then plotted into an excel sheet, giving the framework a working platform. The program allocated 15 percent of one staff member's time to centrally track the various activities. Analytics and tracking tools helped when they were available but field staff input was essential.

Conclusion

In the past, communications and knowledge activities have not generally been measured against pre-identified indicators. After all, to explicitly identify indicators that can be used to track progress in communications and knowledge is to expose an area traditionally perceived as an art to rigorous measurements. This can be both, frightening and exciting—frightening because naming indicators also opens an activity to failure, and exciting because it provides an opportunity to substantively demonstrate progress, success, and/or lessons.

By taking the time to identify and track appropriate indicators and corresponding assumptions, WSP found that the knowledge component of the framework could be used to more effectively and comprehensively articulate its work. WSP has found that tracking communications and knowledge work can help strategically prioritize and manage activities.



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