

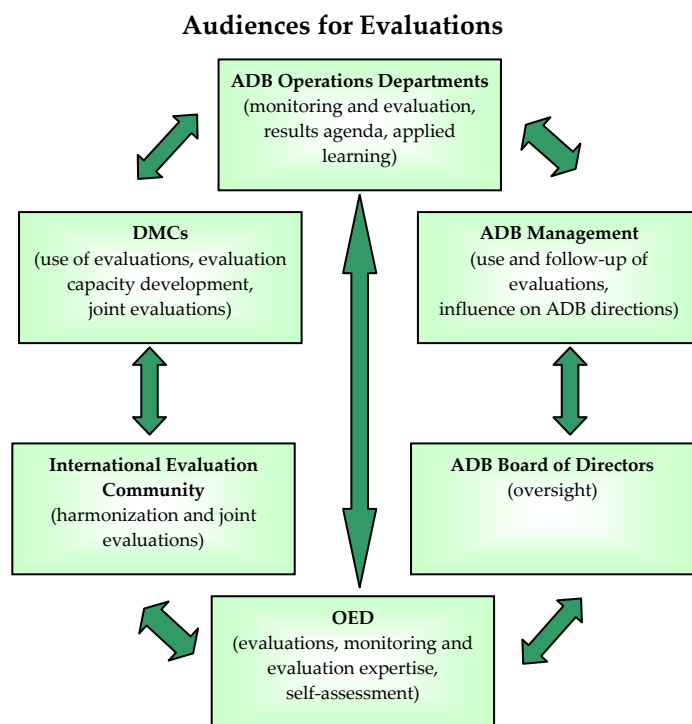
Learning Lessons in ADB

MANILA, PHILIPPINES – To help the Asian Development Bank (ADB) become a **learning organization**, its Operations Evaluation Department (OED) conducts **evaluations** to find out what results are being achieved, what improvements should be considered, and what is being learned. It does so with systematic and impartial assessment of ADB **policies, strategies, programs, and projects**, including their design, implementation, and results. Producing credible, timely, and objective data, information, and knowledge that describe ADB's organizational performance promotes development impact if what is learned informs decision making. However, that is conditioned by a conscious strategy to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time, and helping them (with incentives) to apply it in ways that strive to improve **organizational performance**.

In 2007, OED established a knowledge management unit to catalyze and facilitate identification, creation, storage, sharing, and use of lessons. OED was concerned that failure to do so would result in the operational and developmental impacts of **findings and recommendations** from operations evaluation being minimal. That year, the unit drafted *Learning Lessons in ADB* to provide the strategic framework needed to continue to improve the organizational culture, management system, business processes, information technology solutions, community of practice, and external relations and networking for lesson learning.

Learning Lessons in ADB particularized **audiences for evaluation** and recognized that learning lessons is contingent on improving organizational performance in five areas of competence: strategy development, management techniques, collaboration mechanisms, knowledge sharing and learning, and knowledge capture and storage. Drawing on work by the **Overseas Development Institute**, it established that **knowledge management tools** are more effective where the specific **knowledge management context** of development agencies such as ADB and the external environment they face are dealt with in an integrated and coherent manner. It made clear that knowledge management

must be embedded into business processes and that **four pillars** are critical to success: leadership, organization, technology, and learning, each of which has **functions and activities for knowledge management**. And it identified that **interfaces for lesson learning** as OED itself, other **departments, developing member countries (DMCs)**, and the **international evaluation community**.

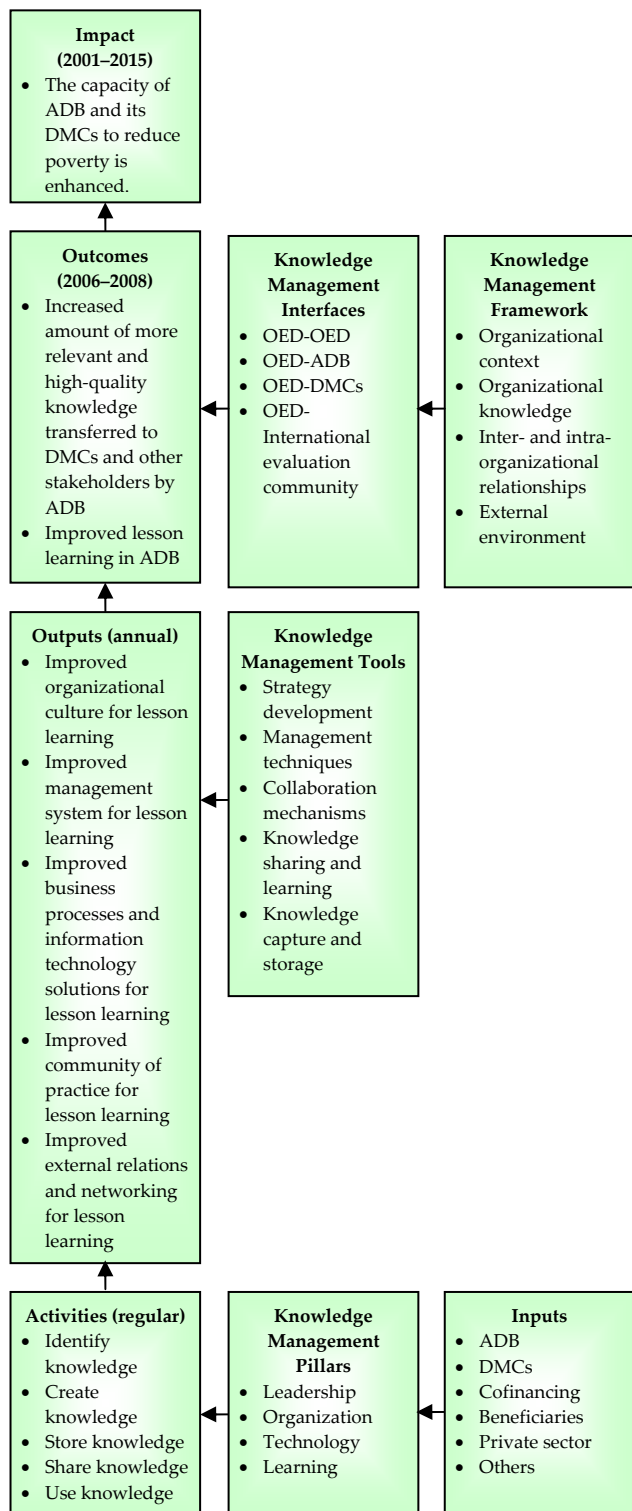


Learning is a process, not an attainment. Hence, OED resolved that its knowledge management business plans should be aligned against ADB's to set in train the drive for continuous improvement that is at the heart of strategic frameworks. *Learning Lessons in ADB* also set the stage for regular annual knowledge audits for systematic identification and analysis of knowledge needs, products and services, gaps, flows, uses, and users from the perspective of learning lessons. This would also permits formulation of annual business plans to deliver outputs steadily against each interface.

OED drew the elements of knowledge, relationships, context, external environment, interfaces, and architecture in a conceptual structure, and generated an

operating framework for lesson learning within which decisions on knowledge management initiatives can be taken and implemented. Within the framework, knowledge management tools can be leveraged with a view to **influencing change**.

Operating Framework for Lesson Learning



"As a Certified Knowledge Manager with 25 years of international development experience in Asia and Africa, **Learning Lessons in ADB** was one of the best reports I have seen on the KM topic," says Dr. Lawrence Wasserman, Washington DC, USA.

Learning Lessons in ADB provides a direction for knowledge management in OED over 3 years. To operate the framework, a number of discrete steps need to be taken. The annual business planning process specifies that regular annual knowledge audits linked to annual business plans will deliver outputs steadily against each interface based on operational needs and priorities but also resources, with flexibility and adaptability. OED resolved to pilot the annual business planning process in 2007 and to repeat it thereafter, each time building on accomplishments with **knowledge performance metrics** and embedding lessons learned from the previous iteration. In 2007, OED also highlighted separately the contribution that **knowledge audits** can make to organizational learning and organizational health, and showed with a real-life example how they open up opportunities in **strategy development, management techniques, collaboration mechanisms, knowledge sharing and learning, and knowledge capture and storage**.

Read Online:

Auditing the Lessons Architecture. Available: www.adb.org/documents/studies/auditing-lessons-architecture/in371-07.asp

Independent Evaluation at the Asian Development Bank.

Available: www.adb.org/evaluation/documents/independent-evaluation/independent-evaluation-ADB.asp

Acting on Recommendations and Learning from Lessons in 2007: Increasing Value Added from Operations

Evaluation. Available: www.adb.org/documents/pers/rpe-oth-2007-15.asp

See Also:

Implementing Knowledge Strategies: Lessons from International Development Agencies. Available:

www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/documents/wp244.pdf

ADB. 2007. *Learning Lessons in ADB*. Manila. Available: www.adb.org/documents/reports/learning-lessons-ADB/strategic-framework-2007-2009.asp