Indicators That Measure Organizational Partnerships

Overview

Organizational partnership refers to the collaboration between two or more organizations with common goals that commit to work together and share resources. By working together, the partners are able to capitalize on their respective strengths in order to achieve a more positive outcome than if each organization had worked individually. Relationships between individuals are addressed in the Social Interaction section. Forming an organizational partnership can be either optional, by volunteering time as in-kind contribution, or mandated by a contractual requirement to work with a specific number of organizations. Within the context of knowledge management (KM), building successful partnerships can help organizations learn from each other's experiences and expertise, work more effectively with stakeholders and other collaborators, and improve health outcomes, as a result of a shared goal/vision. Many global health advances have been achieved as a result of the creation of strategic partnerships, such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; Family Planning 2020 (FP2020); and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, to name a few. KM within organizational partnerships also includes capacity strengthening and support across organizations and within an organization to adopt KM practices.

KM practitioners need a practical tool they can use to measure, nurture, and enhance organizational partnerships through systematic and intentional application of KM principles and techniques. The existing body of literature on organizational partnerships is largely focused on the factors needed for establishing and managing successful partnerships, and does not necessarily recognize the critical roles that KM can play to make a partnership successful. Additionally, existing tools to gauge the effectiveness of partnerships have been designed primarily for evaluation purposes and are used by external evaluators to make summative assessments of partnership strengths and weaknesses (King, 2014).

A literature review was conducted using relevant search terms to identify studies, tools, and guidance on measuring the success and effectiveness of partnerships in health, development, and other related fields. From this process, a list of common indicators relevant to the field of KM for global health programs was created.

Section objective:

This section proposes a standard set of indicators relevant to KM practitioners who need to be able to systematically examine the relationship between KM and organizational partnerships. The reason for measuring linkages between partnerships and KM is twofold. We want to understand: how knowledge management activities influence partnership guidance and quality, and how partnership guidance and quality contribute to KM outcomes, such as learning and action—the application of knowledge.

Using indicators in this category:

This section on organizational partnership includes both self-reported and observable/external indicators. In selecting indicators, users will need to consider how to balance the two types of measurement to look at partnerships in their own contexts. In addition, as for self-reported indicators, depending on the size of the partnership and the scope of data collection, users will need to decide who to include among partner organizations, how many individuals from each partner organization to contact, and how to reconcile a range of scores from several individuals who represent the same organization. It is also important to be aware of courtesy bias and other response biases that may emerge during data collection (see Box 5 Courtesy Bias and Other Response Biases in the KM M&E Guide, p. 30).

Partnerships evolve over time. In order to maximize the outcomes of partnerships, indicators that measure the effectiveness of a partnership should be used over a period of time, rather than used to provide a snapshot of a single point in time (Chaplan & Jones, 2002; IOD PARC, 2005). The eight core indicators proposed in this section are primarily focused on the intersection between KM and organizational partnerships. For the purpose of monitoring and evaluating partnerships in greater depth, KM practitioners may refer to additional resources on measuring the success and effectiveness of partnerships published by health and development agencies.

Additional Resources:

Asian Development Bank (2010). Guidelines for Knowledge Partnerships. Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.
http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2011/guidelines-knowledge-partnerships.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). Evaluation Guide: Fundamentals of Evaluating Partnerships. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/partnership_guide.pdf

King, C. L. (2014). Quality Measures™ Partnership Effectiveness Continuum. Waltham, MA: Education Development Center, Inc. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Quality-Meas...

Subcategories

Indicators that measure aspects of organizational partnerships are grouped into three subcategories: 1) partnership commitment, 2) partnership mutuality, and 3) partnership outcome. Altogether, eight indicators are mapped to these subcategories (indicators 43 to 50).

Subcategory (Area)	Description
Partnership commitment	Focuses on how and in what form partner organizations commit to work together. It refers to a set of constructs that are used to describe processes for developing and nurturing the partnership once it is formally formed/agreed upon, including the shared vision and leadership and management structures and practices.

Partnership mutuality	Focuses on how partner organizations influence each other. It refers to various constructs that can be used to determine the level of partnership mutuality—including trust, satisfaction, and willingness to contribute to/participate in joint activities—in order to understand the partnership's effect on knowledge acquisition and transfer among partner organizations.
Partnership outcome	Refers to the outcomes of the partnership that may add value to or benefit partner organizations and their own stakeholders and project beneficiaries—such as health providers and program managers. It includes the number of KM activities undertaken and knowledge produced, shared, and used.

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