SUMMARY:
Some grant recipients from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria have limited capacity in governance, project oversight, grant and financial management, or compliance issues. To address this knowledge gap, over five years the Grant Management Solutions (GMS) project provided urgent short-term technical support to Global Fund grantees in 78 countries, supporting 360 grants and affecting $5.1 billion of the total signed value of the Global Fund portfolio. To reach this scale, GMS developed a robust knowledge management system focused on developing the technical competency of consultants around the world as well as on creating, sharing, and revising tools. Other technical assistance programs can benefit from this highly effective and streamlined KM system.

PROJECT DATES:
2007-2012

TARGET AUDIENCE:
Program managers, financial managers, KM professionals, donors

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Nina Pruyn, Senior Program Officer, Knowledge Management, Management Sciences for Health, npruyn@msh.org

Using Knowledge Management to Improve the Performance of Global Fund Recipients: The Grants Management Solutions Project

CONTEXT
The Grant Management Solutions (GMS) project provides urgent short-term technical support to Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) and principal recipients of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund). As an international financing institution, the Global Fund invests billions of dollars to support large-scale programs to treat HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The GMS project helps to address bottlenecks and resolve systemic problems that limit performance of Global Fund grants while also strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to better participate in Global Fund activities.

The GMS project is a five-year project financed by the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through the United States Agency for International Development. GMS began operations in August 2007 and will close on September 30, 2012.

SPECIFIC KM ANGLE
In contrast to traditional funding mechanisms, the Global Fund does not provide any technical assistance to grant recipients. Rather, grant development and program implementation is the responsibility of each country. The Global Fund does however monitor the implementation of programs and withholds funds if certain conditions are not met.

Many countries required additional support to manage and oversee their Global Fund programs, especially given the enormous size and scale of many programs. In 2007, the United States Government reallocated 5% of its contribution to the Global Fund to providing technical support directly to Global Fund recipients, and with this, the GMS project was born. Over five years, GMS provided urgent short-term technical support to Global Fund grantees in 78 countries, supporting 360 grants and affecting $5.1 billion (25 percent of the total signed value of the Global Fund portfolio). To reach this scale, GMS developed a robust knowledge management (KM) system to develop the technical competency of consultants around the world and to create, share, and revise tools to support Global Fund recipients.

INTERVENTIONS TO MEET KM NEEDS

Consultant Training:
During the project period, GMS conducted eight Consultant Orientation Workshops to strengthen the capacity of GMS consultants in various regions, which hosted more than 325 participants from 60 countries. The workshops provided participants with information and methodologies for Global Fund technical support in governance and oversight (for Country Coordinating Mechanisms), as well as organizational development and financial management (for Principal Recipients of grants).
**Hub-and-Spoke KM Model:**

Technical Managers based in Arlington, Virginia, with expertise in the four GMS technical areas, supported consultants. The Technical Managers served as knowledge brokers—they received all new products developed by the consultants and determined which could serve as good examples to other consultants and which should be adapted into more general tools that could be used in different settings. These Technical Managers were the hub of technical information for the project. To deal with the volume, scale, and fast pace of product development, the project had a dedicated Knowledge Management Senior Program Officer to ensure documentation and dissemination of activities.

**Tools Development:**

GMS produced 22 toolkits listed below, which were made available on the intranet).

<table>
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<th>Technical Area</th>
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| Principal Recipient                 | • Grant Management Package  
                                  | • Financial Management Toolkit  
                                  | • Rapid Functional Analysis Tool |
| CCM Governance and Oversight        | • CCM Diagnostic Toolkit  
                                  | • Strengthening Basic CCM Functioning Package  
                                  | • CCM Members Renewal Toolkit  
                                  | • Strengthening CCM Secretariats Toolkit  
                                  | • Strengthening CCM Oversight Capacity Package  
                                  | • CCM Conflict-of-Interest Package  
                                  | • Strengthening CCM Communications Package |
| Monitoring and Evaluation           | • Routine Data Quality Assessment Starter Toolkit  
                                  | • Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Strengthening Tool Facilitator’s Toolkit  
                                  | • Subrecipient Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit |

| Procurement and Supply Management   | • Strengthening Procurement and Supply Management Functioning Package  
                                  | • Strengthening Procurement and Supply Management Processes Package  
                                  | • Storage and Distribution Package  
                                  | • Procurement and Supply Management Assessment Tools Package  
                                  | • Quality Assurance Tools Package  
                                  | • Quantification of Health Products Package |
| Cross-Cutting                       | • Grants Dashboards for CCM Oversight Package  
                                  | • Grants Pre-signature Toolkit  
                                  | • Grant Consolidation Toolkit |

Each tool within the toolkits was developed to meet an urgent need in the field. Five types of tools were gathered: diagnostic, model/sample documents, methodological guides, facilitator guides, and templates. Global Fund consultants developed the tools initially with support of Technical Managers. The Technical Managers then shared the tools with other groups facing similar challenges, both through the Consultant Orientation Workshops (mentioned above) and the project website (http://www.gmsproject.org/news/index.cfm). Tools that were still in the early phases of development and were not yet ready for widespread dissemination were shared with consultants on an intranet. Grants Oversight Dashboards—concise reports that clearly display the most important financial, management, and performance indicators for individual Global Fund grants—were tested in seven countries and implemented in a total of 17 countries. They were eventually posted on the Global Fund website for worldwide dissemination (www.theglobalfund.org/en/ccm/guidelines/#dashboard).
AFTER ACTION REVIEW

What worked well

Consultant Training: The consultant workshops offered an essential orientation to the purpose and approach of the GMS project. The project reviewed and updated training materials before each workshop. In addition to the workshops, mentoring of less experienced consultants by team leaders and GMS Technical Managers allowed for practical and informal on-the-job capacity building.

Hub-and-Spoke KM Model: The role of Technical Managers as knowledge brokers was essential to the success of the project. They ensured that new knowledge gained in the field was adapted and translated for a wider audience either through formal tool development, workshop sessions, or general team advice.

Challenges and obstacles

High Turnover of Consultants: Of the 325 individuals whom GMS trained, 71% served as consultants on GMS technical assignments. The remainder became unavailable after training or their technical expertise and language capacity did not match the demand from clients. In addition, given the demands of the technical support requested and the GMS approach, it became apparent during training that the capacity or work style of some consultants did not meet GMS requirements.

Low Use of Virtual Discussion Forum: The GMS intranet incorporated a discussion forum feature, but the project was not successful in engaging the consultants to use this functionality. Contributing factors included lack of promotion for the forums and lack of trained moderators to facilitate discussions.

Sophisticated Tools Require Training: Many of the tools produced by the project are not tools that can be used by untrained individuals. Time constraints prevented the project from developing user notes for all the tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHERS

After implementing the program, the GMS team provided the following recommendations for others.

1. Use a Hub-and-Spoke KM Model

   Providing high-quality technical assistance at the scale, speed, and geographic distribution of the GMS project requires a systematic KM system. Similar projects should facilitate knowledge sharing and transfer through a technical hub and spoke model to ensure quality technical assistance and to capture lessons learned and products developed in the field.

2. Incorporate regular training sessions

   A project heavily dependent on consultants should include regular training sessions, in which content is systematically updated based on experience.

3. Share resources regularly

   Use technology to capture and share resources, for example, through an intranet.

This case study was prepared by Liz McLean, Senior Program Associate, Management Sciences for Health.

Informed by real life experiences implementing knowledge management (KM) activities within health and development organizations, these case studies highlight strategies, challenges, successes, lessons learned, and recommendations for others. They were written by members of the Global Health Knowledge Collaborative (GHKC) and were produced by Knowledge for Health (K4Health), with support from USAID’s Office of Population and Reproductive Health, Bureau for Global Health. The GHKC is a community of practice whose main purpose is sharing and synthesizing knowledge among practitioners of KM within the field of global health and development. K4Health is implemented by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health • Center for Communication Programs (JHU-CCP) in partnership with FHI 360 and Management Sciences for Health (MSH). Visit www.k4health.org for more info.