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GLOBAL WATER FUTURES - KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION STRATEGY
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Introduction

The ability to mobilize knowledge for the benefit of society and the economy is a defining characteristic of the entire Global Water Futures CFREF program. However, knowledge mobilization (KM) is particularly important in the context of the first request for proposals, *Transformative Solutions to User and Stakeholder Needs* (Science Pillar 3). In this call, the knowledge needs of end users are prioritized. These end users include, but are not limited to, community members; local, provincial/territorial, and federal government officials; Indigenous peoples and their governments; non-government organizations; and firms.

This document outlines a proposed *Knowledge Mobilization Strategy* designed to ensure that proposals submitted during for Science Pillar 3 projects address KM, and that funded projects deliver on their KM commitments. The strategy has three interrelated and mutually-supportive sets of rules and procedures relating to (1) proposal development, (2) proposal evaluation, and (3) project implementation. These rules and procedures are designed to ensure that the commitment to KM is clear and tangible for the SMC and research teams from proposal design through project implementation.

Proposal Development

To ensure that knowledge from GWF research is mobilized effectively, KM must be designed into projects from the outset, starting with the proposal stage. The Knowledge Management Core Team recommends that the following rules and procedures be instituted for preparing proposals developed under the *Transformative Solutions to User and Stakeholder Needs* call:

- Proposals must clearly and concretely identify end users and the knowledge needs they have that are being addressed. Evidence that partners and end users have been involved in identifying and specifying these needs must be clear and convincing. Reliance on letters written in support of the original GWF application, while important, is not sufficient. Proposals should demonstrate how end users and partners have been, and will continue to be, involved in refining and extending commitments in the original GWF letters of support, and, as appropriate, identifying, developing and addressing new, more specific needs.

- Researchers must present an appropriate KM strategy in their proposals. This strategy must outline the specific mechanisms that will be used to address end user needs and to

ensure that KM takes place throughout the life of the project, and after if appropriate. Active participation and engagement of end users throughout the life of the project is essential.

- Project governance structures that demonstrate a commitment to knowledge mobilization and meeting end user needs are required in each proposal. For instance, the establishment of a governance and/or management committee comprised of end users and researchers would demonstrate how problems and alternatives are identified mutually over the life of the project. The composition, meeting schedule and reporting structure of such a committee should be addressed in the proposal.

- The specific approach to KM that is appropriate will depend on the nature of the problem being investigated, the type of research needed, and the particular end users and their needs. However, proposals must offer a convincing design rationale for the specific KM strategies used. Best practices for KM are identified in *CFREF White Paper 1, Knowledge Mobilization*.

Proposal Evaluation

The commitment of research teams to KM will be matched by a commitment to KM on the part of the SMC at the proposal evaluation stage. The following rules and procedures will be instituted for evaluating proposals developed under the *Transformative Solutions to User and Stakeholder Needs* call:

- The quality and appropriateness of the KM strategy in the proposal will be one of the criteria used to evaluate proposals. An acceptable KM strategy is a pre-requisite for funding. Potential evaluative questions that can be used to assess KM strategies are outlined below.

The following evaluative questions, based in part on the best practices discussed in White Paper 1, will be used to guide decision making around the quality of KM strategies in the proposals and establish evaluative criteria that could be scored:

- Was the KM strategy designed for and with the end user audience? For example, did the team determine how the end user community normally collects, evaluates and uses knowledge, and does the strategy take this into account?

- Will the proposal generate research outputs that end users need and can use, on user timelines rather than just those of the researchers?

- Is there a clear and effective end user communication plan? Do opportunities exist for active, inclusive and iterative communication among team members and end users using their preferred communication channels? Are forums for sharing information during and after the research compatible with end user needs and characteristics?

- If appropriate, does the proposed project jointly create conceptual frameworks or models that can be used as "boundary objects" to strengthen understanding within the team? In

cases where creating mutual understanding is especially challenging, does the team make effective use of intermediaries?

- What measures will be established to ensure accountability for knowledge mobilization within the team, e.g., to ensure that ideas and information flow in both directions between researchers and partners; and to ensure that all participants – faculty researchers, graduate students and post-doctoral researchers, and partners view themselves as being accountable for KM? Are lines of accountability for KM clear among all team members?
- Have sufficient funds been assigned in the budget to support the KM strategy throughout the life of the project? *Projects that fail to provide the funds needed to support the KM strategy should not be funded*.
- Does the project identify a timeline of proposed KM activity from beginning to end that lays out how KM goals will be mutually achieved?

Project Implementation

Research teams that succeed at the proposal stage will be accountable for KM in the same way they are accountable for complying with financial rules, ethics requirements, data reporting and storage rules, and environmental impact assessment policies. The following accountability rules and procedures will be instituted for projects supported under the *Transformative Solutions to User and Stakeholder Needs* call.

- The Principal Investigator(s) for every project is ultimately accountable for ensuring that the KM strategy outlined in the proposal (as amended) is implemented. Project team members are accountable to each other, and, ultimately, to the Principal Investigator.
- Each year, as part of other reporting requirements established by the GWP SMC, the Principal Investigator for each project must submit a KM progress report. Successes, failures, challenges, and changes should be addressed in the report. Where appropriate, evidence of successful KM should be provided.
- It is likely that teams will have to adapt and respond to changes in the environment in which end users operate, e.g., to meet changed or new needs of end users. Therefore, teams should be allowed to adjust or amend their KM strategies to respond to changing circumstances and experiences. However, if major changes are needed, or took place, in the KM strategy during the reporting period, then as part of the annual report the Principal Investigator must file an updated KM strategy with the GWF Head Office. This strategy must be approved by the Strategic Management Committee, ideally in consultation with the End User Advisory Committee.
- The Strategic Management Committee will establish an KM auditor function in the GWF Head Office. The person responsible for the KM audit function reports to the SMC, and will have the authority and resources to contact partners and end users identified in reports from the

Principal Investigator, and to discuss and verify the extent to which KM has taken place, including the timelines for project activity that involve users.

- Projects that fail to demonstrate satisfactory implementation of their KM strategies, including unsatisfactory reports of progress, will be placed on probation, or, if appropriate, terminated. Potential for renewed funding in Year 4 will depend on demonstrated efficacy of meeting user needs during the first stage of the project, and in subsequent stages.