



Australasian Fire and Emergency
Service Authorities Council

Thinking Requires Knowledge An Approach to Knowledge Creation





Acknowledgement

Thinking Requires Knowledge: An approach to Knowledge Creation
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This work has been prepared as a guide for fire, land management and emergency service agencies who undertake or are considering embarking on knowledge creation and management initiatives.

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Introduction

The Vision for AFAC is 'Fire and emergency services strengthened through sharing, collaboration and innovation'.

This Vision represents the industry's ongoing pursuit of awareness, learning, continuous improvement and excellence in serving the communities of Australasia. Managing information and enhancing the individual and collective knowledge of the industry is therefore crucial in achieving this Vision.

Knowledge is usually constructed by people through interaction with other people; through access to information; a result of experience or education and by the environment and culture in which they live and work.

Knowledge resides in a person's mind, can be highly personal and is ever changing. It can be embedded in systems and processes and is a key ingredient in influencing the way people think and the choices they make.

The management and evolution of such personal knowledge is therefore concerned with:

- innovation and sharing behaviours
- managing ambiguous complex knowledge topics through networks and connections
- exploring smart, best practice processes and ideally deploying human-centred technologies.

Put more formally, knowledge management according to the AS5037:2005 Knowledge Management Guide¹, is "a trans-disciplinary approach to improving organisational outcomes and learning through maximising the use of knowledge. It involves the design, implementation and review of social and technological activities and processes to improve the creation, sharing, application and use of knowledge".

Outlined in this paper is an approach to the creation and evolution of knowledge, an approach that simplifies a range of complex concepts into a knowledge model that has a focus on 'thinking and interaction' at its core.

This model puts the work people do in context with the environment in which they operate, and the choices they ultimately make.

¹ Adopted by the AFAC Knowledge Management Group to guide its thinking on a Knowledge Management approach

Section 1

Knowledge Management Approach

Background and Context

AFAC has articulated in its Strategic Plan 2008-2015 a range of outcomes that it wishes to achieve over the life of the Plan. Many of these outcomes involve the continual improvement of existing practices, processes and systems as well as the attainment and creation of new knowledge; made available to the industry for the benefit of the broader community.

Through AFAC's group structure knowledge is attained, exchanged, created or evaluated. This structure has been the primary mechanism to stimulate the thinking to:

- assess the effectiveness of programs
- develop new products
- ensure industry decision-makers and practitioners are engaged and informed
- support practitioners in their roles

Complementary to the work of AFAC and crucial to the industry's future is the provision of new knowledge that provides a better understanding of the complex social, political, economic and environmental issues as they relate to the fire and emergency services industry and to some extent emergency management generally.

Industry focused research, along with effective education and knowledge transfer programs are valuable elements that contribute to the richness of knowledge for AFAC members and the industry in general.

Importance of Knowledge to the Industry

Never before has the importance of knowledge been so profound and the potential to impact on the industry so timely.

Environmental and economic shocks are having a deep and increasing impact on Australasian communities. This fact, along with demographic change and major policy development and reform is resulting in increased pressure on fire and emergency service agencies to do more with less, at a time of increasing demand for services.

High economic growth has contributed to economic prosperity; standards of living are high and society expects a strong response to environmental imperatives. Greater economic and environmental value is placed on the protection of natural resources, biodiversity, agriculture, parks, forests and water catchments.

Highly skilled, better educated people are more connected than ever before and demand responsive and effective services. Personal and professional relationships are increasingly transient and society is willing to rely on private markets and pay for services. Population growth has scaled back and migration has increased, with immediate impact on cultural diversity and reshaping of society.

Technology advancements have accelerated to incorporate profound levels of connectedness, convergence and sophistication. New technologies have altered the way people work, with the increasing potential to eliminate dull, dirty and dangerous work; industries are more automated.

Coastal and urban fringe developments continue at rapid pace, populations have declined in rural areas and age profiles have altered. People view volunteerism as a short-term proposition if at all, with economic factors placing the traditional volunteerism ethos under pressure. The industry is expected to experience generational change within the profiles of its workforce therefore the capture of extensive tacit knowledge, experience and learning becomes increasingly important and highly sought after.

These factors, combined with the impacts of climate change where prolonged and extreme emergency events have potential to overwhelm and outstrip, on a regular basis, the capacity of agencies individually and collectively, represent a challenge to the suitability and sustainability of existing emergency management practices.

To strengthen the industry into the future and support its need to be agile and adapt to meet ever increasing and complex demands, it is evident more attention is required to equipping people with the knowledge they need to make the right decisions. If thinking requires knowledge and knowledge resides in people, then attention needs to be paid not only to the knowledge itself, but explicitly to the people who interpret and make sense of that knowledge and subsequently make decisions.

So what is Knowledge?

If information is the raw material used to make decisions, knowledge is what provides the context for how people think.

Knowledge is what makes up the thoughts in people's heads, what guides their behaviour and what is used every day to make choices. It is used to apply meaning to information and subsequently decide what to do.

It is typically organised into the following types:

Cultural knowledge - the assumptions, beliefs and norms used by people to assign value and significance to new information or knowledge². This cultural knowledge represents layers of understanding, including personal values and ethics, organisational cultures and norms, society values and expectations, and national sovereignty.

Tacit knowledge is embedded in the expertise and experience of people. Tacit knowledge is highly personal and hard to formalise, making it difficult to communicate or share.

Subjective insights, intuitions and hunches fall into this category of knowledge. Tacit knowledge also has a thinking dimension, since it consists of beliefs, perceptions, ideals, values, emotions and mental models so ingrained they are taken for granted. Though they cannot be articulated very easily, this dimension of tacit knowledge shapes the way people perceive the world (Takeuchi 1998).

Explicit knowledge or rule-based knowledge that can be expressed in words and numbers and shared in the form of data, formulae, specifications, manuals, universal principles etc. This kind of knowledge can be shared formally and systematically. Explicit knowledge can easily be stored in databases, "processed" by computers, and transmitted electronically.

Knowledge can be revealed and/or codified, through a range of products or services, including:

- Organisational systems, protocols, procedures: documented practices, rules and other organisational arrangements that guide the activities of people
- Research publication: production, marketing, distribution and sale of books, papers, electronic material; publication of results in peer-reviewed academic journals
- Consultancies: project-based research, advisory or consultancy services involving professional knowledge as a service
- Knowledgeable graduates: subject matter experts, people possessing knowledge, skills and capability
- Professional Education: formal, accredited courses, qualifications or certifications for professional recognition and career advancement
- People exchange: people available to assist in the development of particular strategies or developments


New Information and Knowledge

New information is being gathered by people every day. It is processed and interpreted, with relevant information retained, not so relevant information discarded or stored for later use. As this process continues new knowledge is created and the thinking of individuals evolves and matures.

With the growing amount of information received (facilitated by a range of technological advancements) and the nature of the issues becoming more complex, the ability for individual agencies to research and create new knowledge is becoming increasingly difficult.

In response and to keep pace with change, the industry (with government support) has invested in the formation of a Co-operative Research Centre (CRC). This initiative, along with other research commissioned by agencies and the industry in general, has signalled a commitment to generating new knowledge for the benefit of the industry and the safety of the community.

Whilst a CRC provides robust and sophisticated new knowledge opportunities, agencies themselves will continue to create additional new knowledge and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the services they currently provide. Considerable investment is being made right across the industry in advancing the thinking and leveraging technology advancement to enable change.



With an ageing workforce due for retirement, life long experiences and valuable industry knowledge will no longer be readily accessible. As new generations of volunteers and employees enter the industry how can they tap into the insights, experiences and knowledge gained by so many people, over so many years?

Given the intent and purpose of AFAC it is well positioned to continue to support the strengthening of the industry through the facilitation of a deep, rich and ever increasing pool of industry information and knowledge. To do so requires utilising knowledge management principles and practices to assist with creating a way of thinking and behaviour commensurate with an industry that anticipates and embraces change; is agile enough to act quickly and is adaptable to predicted and unpredicted change.

Managing knowledge therefore requires particular attention to be paid to the concepts and understanding around which knowledge is created, exchanged and used.

Managing Knowledge

Managing knowledge means putting a broad range of arrangements in place so that knowledge is created, exchanged and used so people can succeed in their endeavours. It means creating an environment in which both the authors of content and the seekers of the knowledge willingly interact out of mutual self-interest.

A key impediment to this is convincing those with the knowledge (tacit knowledge) to exchange their knowledge with people they don't know, particularly if there is no return or reward for their effort in putting the knowledge into a form that can be exchanged.

The challenge is to motivate the production of high-quality relevant knowledge products that allows a knowledge seeker the ability to understand an author's thinking without the parties having to talk to each other. (Most content currently produced by companies needs to be backed up with oral discussion³.)

Knowledge products must therefore become more insightful and relevant, easier to access and take in.

Benefits of Managing Knowledge

There is a mounting body of evidence to suggest elevating knowledge management from a mostly ad-hoc, implicit and informal activity, to an explicit and sustainable process with a similar status to project management and financial management as a key organisational activity can pay significant dividends.

Knowledge management is not a new concept; it has been around as a management discipline since about 1995. Initially received as just another management fad, knowledge management has been elevated to the status of crucial importance to achieving organisational objectives. These include improved performance and innovation and with greater focus on knowledge as an asset.

Users can simultaneously benefit from knowledge and increase its value as they add to, adapt and enrich the knowledge base. In traditional economics, assets decline in value as more people use them. By contrast, knowledge assets can grow in value as they become a standard on which others can build (Jonathan D Day and James C Wendler).

Greater focus on knowledge as an asset is seen to deliver improvements to performance and innovations such as:

- Organisational approaches to information management are strengthened resulting in efficiencies, enhanced management of intellectual property and expanded interoperability.
- People think and interact with increasing levels of richness and growing confidence that they have the ability to make appropriate decisions.
- The effectiveness of an organisation's knowledge management process can have a direct impact on service delivery and bottom lines.
- Teams don't just tell one another a story. They listen, ask and reflect together. Creating such an environment helps people feel they are an integral part of the organisation.
- Improved access to quality information and improved decision making.
- Organisations become more innovative.
- Reduced duplication of effort.
- Talent is rewarded and opportunities realised.
- A reduction in the risk of knowledge and experience being lost to an organisation once a volunteer or employee has moved on.

Section 2

A Knowledge Model for AFAC

Principles

The AFAC Knowledge Management approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- Thinking and interaction to obtain shared meaning and purpose is at the heart of knowledge creation.
 - Knowledge management is everyone's responsibility.
 - Knowledge is usually constructed by people through interaction with other people; through access to information and as a result of experience or education.
 - The knowledge management approach needs to fit the evolutionary stage of the knowledge – knowledge is not static, it evolves and matures.
- The primary purpose of information created or acquired in accordance with the business of AFAC is in the interests of the fire and emergency services sector and ultimately for public good. As such, AFAC members voluntarily contribute information and will make every reasonable effort to share information and ensure such information is freely available⁴.
 - Benefits of sharing should exceed the burden of doing so.
 - Knowledge management should enable more effective and fulfilling work and lead to more goal oriented and adaptive behaviour.

4. AFAC Policy, Information Sharing and Management of Intellectual Property, April 2008

AFAC Knowledge Model

The AFAC Knowledge Model (Figure 1) proposes a way of representing the elements involved in creating knowledge. These elements are intrinsically linked and when combined with the knowledge management principles outlined above represent the basis upon which a proposed AFAC Knowledge Management Strategy (Section 3) has been constructed.

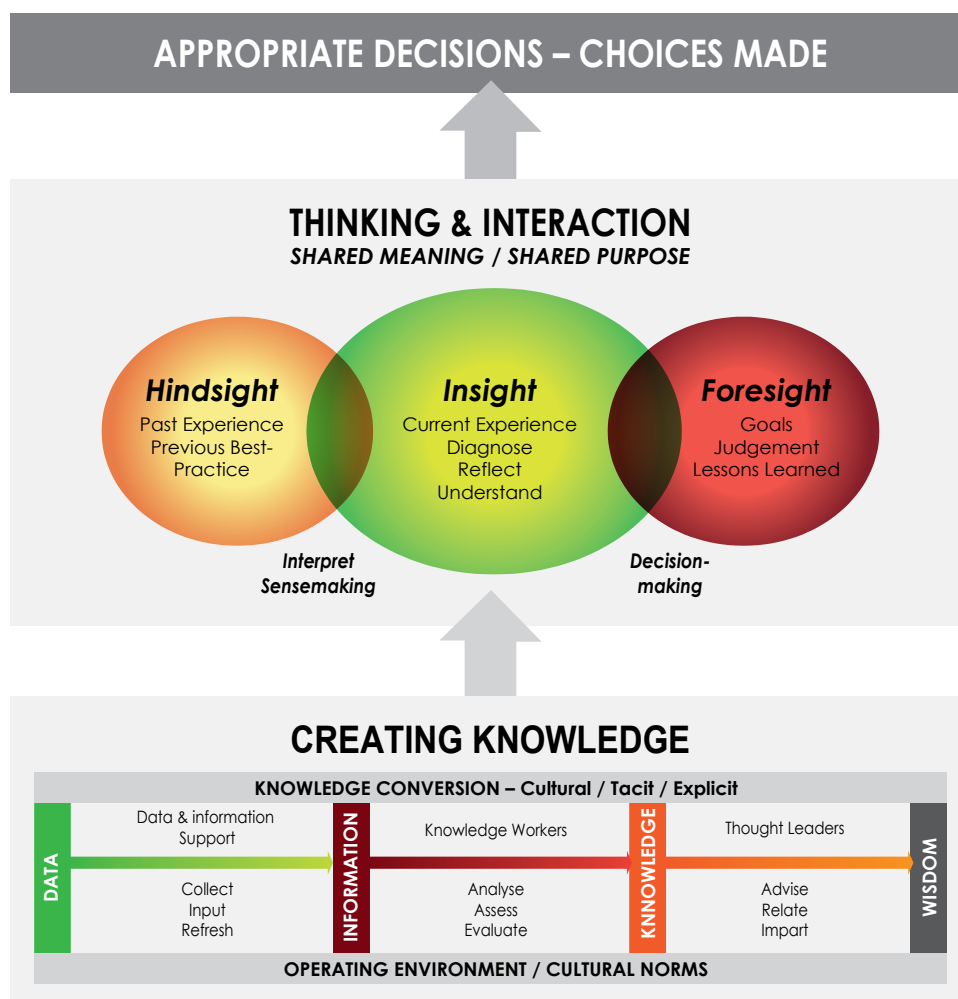


Figure 1: AFAC Knowledge Model (Attachment 1 shows full size)

Thinking and Interaction

Thinking and interaction is the main focus of the Knowledge Model and the approaches subsequently outlined. It is the production and exchange of insights that help people think differently as they make decisions and take action.

Adopting a focus on people and engendering a culture that nurtures and supports knowledge creation and evidence-based decision-making is recognised as important to the AFAC members and the industry.

Framed around the common practice of learning from the past (hindsight), considering the present (insight) and applying new approaches in the future (foresight), this Model supports the creation of an environment that encourages, stimulates and facilitates the creation and exchange of high-quality knowledge products and services, extending the limits of peoples' knowledge and enriching the learning experience.

Knowledge Conversion

The journey towards high-quality knowledge products and services begins with the capture of data; a collection of raw facts, statistics, particulars and specifics from which conclusions can be drawn.

Significant investment is made right across the industry in the capture of such data and information, including the administration and infrastructure necessary to create and collect, organise and store it, make it available for access and use and to maintain its quality and accuracy.

The challenge and real value to an organisation however is making sense of it all; thinking about what is relevant and what is not and converting it to new knowledge to make informed choices.

Roles and Responsibility

A key principle of the AFAC Knowledge Model is: 'Knowledge is everyone's responsibility'. In saying that there are particular roles that are performed that whilst intrinsically linked, are separately explained.

Data and Information Support: Those people whose roles are associated with data processing, database management, collection of facts, evidence, particulars and specifics which are subsequently made available to knowledge workers.

Knowledge Workers: This role entails sense-making and transforming, integrating and analysing data, information, individual knowledge and knowledge culled from other sources to generate value-added products and services.

People involved in knowledge work understand the domain of their responsibility, shape their operating environment, understand the people and information that are potential resources in that environment, and have the education, experiences, intuition, skills and authority to act.

Thought Leaders: People who are recognised for their particular expertise, knowledge or innovative ideas and with the ability to advise, relate and impart their insights.

For any knowledge topic people could perform one or all of the roles identified, depending on their responsibilities within an organisational structure and the complexity of the topic being considered.

Knowledge Establishment and Dissemination

Mechanisms are needed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge from those who created it in the first place and whose thinking evolved as a result, to those seeking the knowledge and its potential insights.

As the knowledge evolves, so the way it is managed also needs to evolve⁵. Different approaches are necessary, depending on the knowledge topic, to persuade people that the quality of thought, the facts and the logic presented represent a better or new way of thinking.

Five stages of knowledge progression have been identified to explain the concept of moving knowledge from its early stages of development, where insights are known by a few people, to where these insights are accepted as the standard and are easily and broadly available across a wide range of industries and applications. Not all knowledge topics need to go through all stages.

Stage 1 - Exploration and Approach

As with most new ideas, innovations or pieces of work, a small number of people usually begin exploring a problem or opportunity, looking for insights into past experiences, researching previous best practice, or designing new and innovative solutions. The first knowledge products are created. A first early trial could be conducted, testing the thinking and logic with colleagues or those within a trusted network.

Stage 2 – Continued Exploration and Raising Awareness

With growing confidence in the knowledge now emerging, a larger group of subject

matter experts would be engaged, with a view to sharing this new knowledge and subsequently obtaining broader thinking and interaction on the topic.

A bigger group of people are now aware of the new knowledge and have begun to gain insights into what it means and how it can be used to support them with their roles and responsibilities.

Deployment could commence with a trial of some early good practice of new processes, systems or techniques.

Stage 3 – Improved Practice and Increased Skills

Confidence in the knowledge continues to expand and grow and facilitate the further deployment and establishment of best practice.

A broader community of practitioners are engaged and persuaded by this new thinking. They take up the new knowledge and begin to modify systems and processes, or introduce new approaches.

Stage 4 – Alignment and Standardisation

Now known by many, the new knowledge is well accepted and incorporated into systems and processes; there are a range of knowledge products available to a broad community of knowledge seekers.

Stage 5 – Embedded, interpretation and learning

The new knowledge is now fully embedded into the systems, processes and practices not only within industry but across the wider community. A wide variety of knowledge products are available and people are fully informed of their use and application.

5. Knowledge maturity models; Nick Milton; Inside Knowledge, Volume 11, Issue 7, Page 26

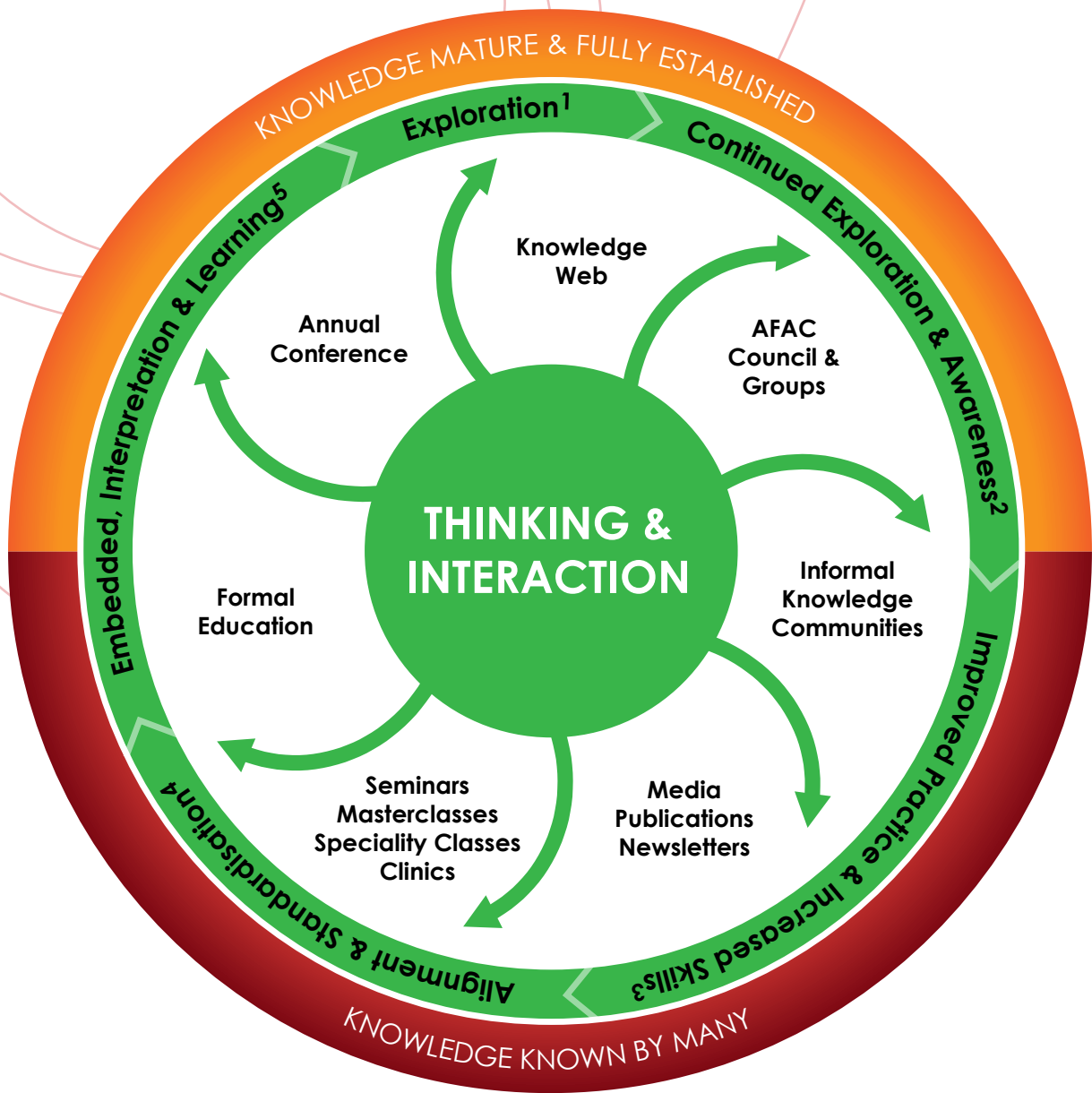


Figure 2: AFAC – Enabling Knowledge Maturity (Attachment 2 shows full size)

“In today’s changing economy, the key to faster, cheaper, and better is to bring the full force of a company’s knowledge to bear on the effort. Knowledge, not land, labor, and capital, is now the lifeblood of a corporation”
- Hauschild, Licht, and Stein

Enabling Knowledge Exchange

AFAC members are drawn from every state and territory across Australia and New Zealand and from around the Pacific. It is their accumulated knowledge, strength of experience and desire to learn that creates the foundation on which AFAC continues to build.

With a workforce of over thirty thousand employees, and over 200,000 volunteers, the opportunities for people to meet, let alone share their knowledge are limited. The production of high-quality, insightful knowledge products and services therefore represents a significant value proposition for the industry generally and individuals specifically.

Whilst factors such as individual motivation, senior management support, organisational design, systems thinking, business excellence framework and learning organisation concepts are recognised as important enablers to the strategic intent of this paper, they are deemed to already be accepted components of enabling knowledge exchange.

The focus of this section therefore is on pragmatic, enabling activities and programs, specifically targeted to facilitate greater exchange of knowledge and interaction between people. These enablers can be specifically selected and conducted to facilitate the exchange and maturity of the knowledge.

Detailed in Attachment 3, these enablers comprise:

- The AFAC Knowledge Web
- AFAC Strategy Groups
- Annual Conference
- Workshops, Seminars, Masterclasses, Specialty Classes, Clinics
- Formal Education
- Media, publications, newsletters
- Informal knowledge communities
- Research

Section 3

AFAC Knowledge Management Strategy

Strategic Alignment

The AFAC Knowledge Management Strategy contributes to Goal 4 of the AFAC Strategic Plan: A culture that nurtures and supports knowledge creation and evidence based decision-making.

It seeks to facilitate easy access to quality information, with high levels of thinking and interaction and where networks allow the development of shared meaning and understanding, creating an environment where there is access to the accumulated knowledge of the sector to inform decision choices.

Scope

The AFAC Knowledge Management Strategy primarily applies to the work of AFAC in the context of its Strategic Plan and the Vision for the future. It does not intend to include any approaches, actions or methodologies that member agencies may wish to directly pursue in the interests of their own organisations.

However the actions identified in this Strategy may permeate into member agencies, given the involvement of agency representatives in AFAC work. Conversely, the work occurring within agencies may also influence the approaches outlined in this Strategy.

This is a desirable situation, but one that needs to be managed to ensure the work complements the agencies knowledge management approaches and the research adoption arrangements being developed in conjunction with the Bushfire CRC.

The Strategy also takes into consideration private and public sector organisations whose business directly involve or relate to fire and emergency service provision and other key stakeholders who contribute to the fire and emergency services industry.

The Strategy does not explicitly incorporate formal education approaches and programs, however, the relationship between the formal and informal learning processes are outlined in the AFAC Knowledge Management Model.

Objectives

Taking into account the Knowledge Approach and Model as outlined in sections one and two, the following objectives have been identified as specific to this Strategy:

- Knowledge management is valued and accepted as a management practice within AFAC member agencies.
- A demand for high-quality knowledge products and services is created and a return on investment attained.
- Creativity is cultivated and knowledge management behaviours rewarded.
- Motivated people are supported in knowledge management initiatives.

Deliverables

- The Knowledge Model and management approach is agreed and adopted.
- The implementation plan is endorsed and resources allocated, including detailed project plans where required.
- Knowledge management activities commence using the research adoption program developed in conjunction with the Bushfire CRC as a priority.
- High-quality knowledge products and services are produced and marketed to members.

Measuring Success

The nature of the Knowledge Management approach involves cultural change and cultural change takes time. The planning horizon for implementation therefore stretches over the long term.

AFAC will measure its progress through a qualitative survey specific to the hallmarks of an ‘adaptive’ knowledge management ecosystem as outlined in the Australian Standard (AS5037: 2005), which include:

- People – there is high levels of trust and credibility
- Content – products are rated as high-quality
- Process – knowledge is a flow; mistakes viewed as learning opportunities
- Technology – sophisticated, intelligent search

Complementing the measurement of cultural change, AFAC will also measure the performance of its knowledge demand through:

- Increase in numbers of members seeking access to knowledge products
- Increase in numbers of products and services provided

Implementation Plan

Based on the models described earlier, this Strategy proposes to commence the establishment of knowledge management as a sustainable and important AFAC business activity, contributing to the achievement of Goal 4 of the AFAC Strategic Plan.

Actions to commence implementation of the AFAC Knowledge Management Strategy are outlined below and have been organised according to the AS5037:2005 Knowledge Management Guide categories of people, content, process and technology.

People

Actions identified in this category are targeted to ensure more and more people talk positively about the benefits of knowledge management and guide, coach and mentor others in the process of knowledge sharing and management.

People seek out opportunities to talk with others and share their stories and experiences; connect like minded people and recognise the benefit of strong networks. They are recognised for their contribution to the capturing of the industry's history and the shaping of its future.

Action	Timeline			Responsible Group
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Present the KM approach, model and plan to all AFAC Groups, member agencies and stakeholders.				KMG
Develop and implement a program of events, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masterclasses • Seminars • Specialty Classes/ Clinics 				AFAC
Incorporate a KM stream into AFAC/BCRC Conference.				KMG
Promote the adoption of the KM Approach/Model within agencies.				KMG Rep
Develop and implement an Alumni Program, incorporating piloting a mentoring program				AFAC
Actively promote and foster a community of interest on Knowledge Management using the Knowledge Web forums.				All
Design an awards program to recognise individual and agency KM initiatives.				AFAC

Content

Knowledge management becomes an infusion of the knowledge that resides in people's heads (tacit knowledge), the information that is documented and recorded (explicit knowledge) and the attitudes and behaviours of individuals (cultural knowledge) within the industry. The focus is on the production of high-quality knowledge products and services.

Action	Timeline			Responsible Group
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Ensure the BCRC Research results are accessible on the AFAC Knowledge Web.				BCRC
Develop arrangements for the production of high-quality knowledge products and services, for example 'Agency Insight' program, targeted at lessons learned.				AFAC
Evaluate the information architecture of the AFAC Knowledge Web to ensure it meets user needs and incorporates KM model.				AFAC
All AFAC Groups to identify their needs and priorities and content accessible on the AFAC Knowledge Web.				AFAC

Process

Knowledge is treated as an 'intangible asset' just like a brand or goodwill. It is valued and owned by the beneficiaries of the information, not necessarily the creators. Opportunities to meet informally and share information become common place and an accepted part of the organisation's activities.

Action	Timeline			Responsible Group
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Develop clear protocols and guidelines for creating, capturing and storing data, information and knowledge.				AFAC
Develop systematic processes across AFAC for knowledge capture and transfer.				AFAC
Provide a tool to support agency self-assessment against AS5037:2005 Knowledge Management Guide.				AFAC
Promote the improvement of information management processes within AFAC and agencies.				All
Incorporate knowledge management principles into learning and development programs.				AFAC
Explore e-learning and other multi-channel options to contribution to KM.				AFAC

Technology

The AFAC Knowledge Web is seen as an extension of a member agency's 'work place' where access to industry information and advice is readily available. It brings together convergent technologies, including collaboration tools, content management and portal links to key partners.

Action	Timeline			Responsible Group
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
Promote and market the AFAC Knowledge Web within member agencies.				KMG
CIO Group to identify additional technology that could support collaboration and knowledge sharing opportunities.				AFAC
Extend access to industry knowledge outside of AFAC membership.				AFAC
Plan and execute Phase II of the Knowledge Web development.				AFAC

Governance

The AFAC Knowledge Management Group will serve as the principle owners of this Strategy and undertake the necessary work to deliver the outcome.

AFAC Manager Strategy and Knowledge will act as program manager, reporting to the CEO. AFAC Council will act as higher authority for key decision points.

Regular reporting will be in accordance with the normal AFAC business model and as determined by detailed project planning.

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, hand-drawn style orange lines that swirl together, framing the text on the left side of the page.

Definitions

Data: A collection of facts, evidence, particulars and specifics from which conclusions may be drawn.

Information: Data in a context to which meaning has been attributed.

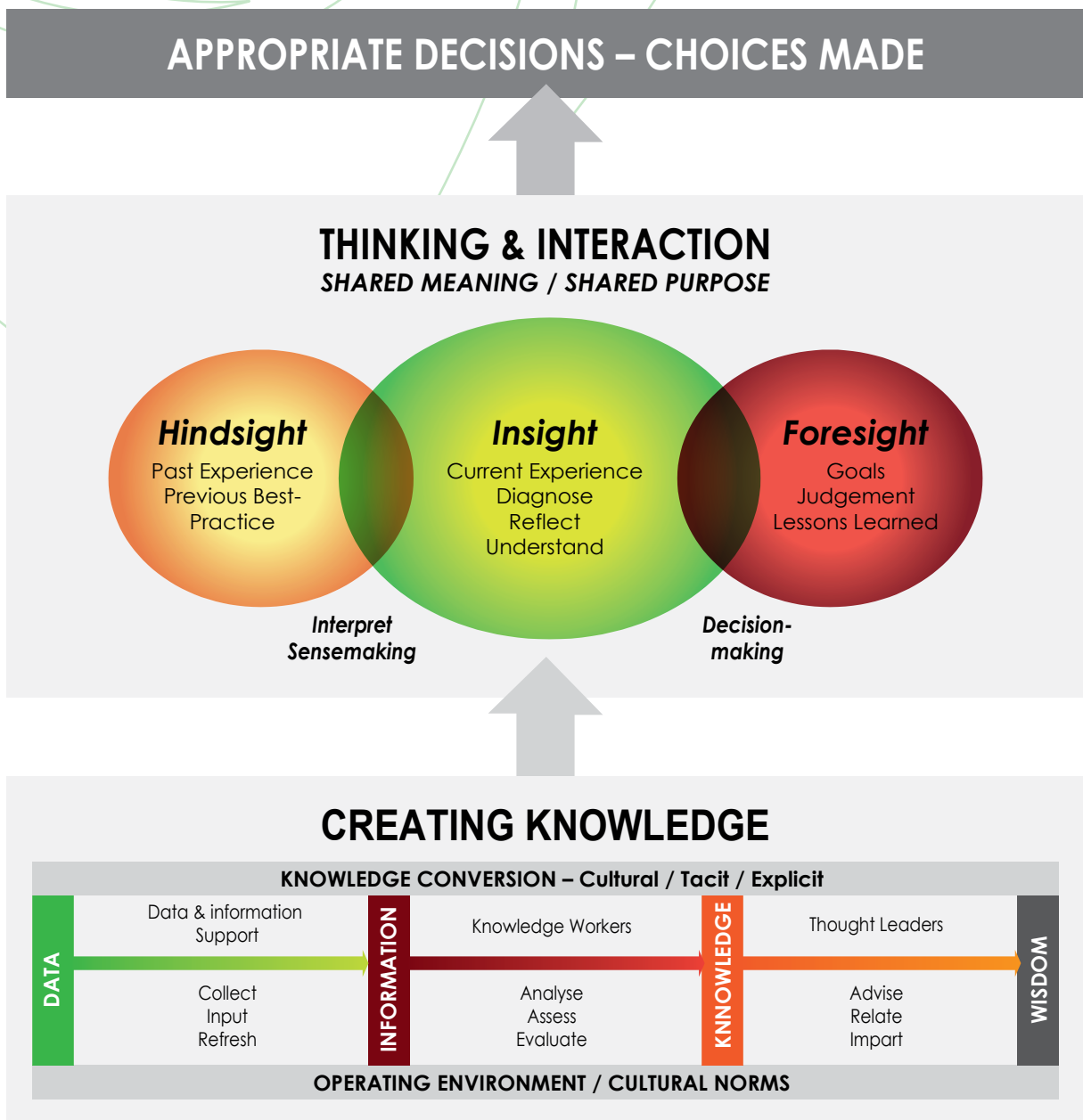
Knowledge: A body of understanding and skills that is constructed by people and increased through interaction with other people and with information. The psychological result of perception, interpretation, learning and reasoning.

Wisdom: Ability to apply knowledge, or experience or understanding with commonsense, confidence and insight.

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Attachment 1 AFAC Knowledge Model



Attachment 2

AFAC Enabling Knowledge Exchange



Attachment 3

AFAC Knowledge Management Enablers

Enabling Activity	Purpose
AFAC Knowledge Web	A world wide web presence that provides an online, virtual environment to facilitate access to and dissemination of industry information; interaction and discussion between interested parties; informal e-learning and to underpin more informed decision-making.
Media, Publications/ Newsletters	Communications mechanisms to disseminate to the broader industry audience data, information, stories and insights.
AFAC Groups	A gathering of people comprising senior representatives from member agencies, established for the explicit purpose of progressing the business of AFAC.
Research	The process of discovering new knowledge or of synthesis of existing knowledge into a form useful for a stated purpose and to extend the limits of human knowledge.
Informal Knowledge Communities	Groups of people who facilitate and nurture ongoing relationships and a knowledge exchange where ideas are explored on an ongoing basis. Knowledge communities may meet face-to-face or meet in a virtual environment, such as the AFAC Knowledge Web.
AFAC/BCRC Annual Conference	Opportunity for large scale networking, exposure to a wide range of specialty topics presented by thought leaders. Offers some level of discussion for those with common interests. Significant trade exposure opportunities and access to industry personnel.
Workshops	An interactive group meeting (often facilitated by one or more people) aimed at addressing a particular issue (eg learning about research outcomes on a particular topic or producing a specific outcome (such as a policy recommendation). Workshops are typically brief and intensive, of half or full-day duration.
Seminars and Forums	Seminars and forums typically follow a lecture style and address specific content. A forum might involve more open-ended discussion to explore a particular topic. Both are short in duration (eg 2-3 hours) or half day, depending on the content.
Masterclasses	Small, intimate events that provide an opportunity for students (and spectators) to watch and listen, as the expert works with individuals to refine their approach or attitude to specific topics.
Specialty Classes	Mini masterclasses that offer an introduction to the basics of new concepts that can be further explored over time. Typically short in duration, (eg 2-3 hours).
Specialty Courses	Courses designed for a particular audience to advance learning. Courses include instruction, discussion with an expectation of pre-reading and follow-up work on the part of the learner to apply the new learning to the industry context. Courses may or may not be formally accredited (see formal education). Courses are typically 2-4 days in duration, sometimes with follow-up workshops.
Clinics	Subject matter practitioners facilitating small events that focus on practical, pragmatic approaches, ideas and processes to produce results.
Formal Education	Formally accredited learning that results in particular qualification (eg Certificate in Vocational Education and training) or Degree or Diploma in Tertiary education.