



ONTARIO MUNICIPAL **Knowledge Network**

Sharing information to improve services

Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network

Terms of Reference MARCH, 2009

This document sets out a new vision and expanded mandate for the Ontario Centre for Municipal Best Practices, to be known as the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network (OMKN). The extension of the mandate, based on an extensive consultation, recognizes the diversity of Ontario's 444 municipal governments, their services and service delivery structures, related capacity/resources as well as the on-going evolution of service provision in all of Ontario's communities.

Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network (OMKN).

The Municipal Knowledge Network is a web-based resource that documents approaches that municipal officials from across Ontario and other jurisdictions have successfully used to improve service delivery and provide better value to taxpayers.

OMKN's Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives:

Mission:

To be a forum that develops linkages and dialogue among municipal officials. It will be a state-of-the-art web-enabled portal that will provide Ontario municipalities with co-ordinated one-window access to leading edge performance management information and tools, enabling them to increase their capacity to make informed strategic service delivery decisions.

Vision:

Sharing information to improve services

Goals:

The Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network exists to:

- Undertake and publish research on municipal best/beneficial practices
- Share knowledge and information to support the continuous improvement of municipal services
- Celebrate municipal successes and recognize excellent service delivery models

Objectives:

In order to meet these key goals, the OMKN will:

- Foster dialogue with and among municipalities
- Produce 'best practice' reports based on effectiveness and efficiency data
- Document beneficial practices (these may not necessarily be based on the rigorous efficiency and effectiveness analysis that is used to produce 'best practice' reports)
- Articulate the value of applied performance techniques and investments
- Conduct inter-jurisdictional environmental scans and identify useful resources for Ontario municipalities
- Establish an Associations' Advisory Committee and link to other organizations and program areas.
- Continue to evaluate its purpose and make necessary adjustments to reflect needs of municipalities

Success will be measured by:

- Quantum of users and diversity of audience
- Number of practice areas
- Interest and number of Associations undertaking research and participating in the OMKN
- Number of times posted articles/reports are opened and downloaded
- Number of registered members on discussion board

OMKN's Primary Activity:

The primary activity of the OMKN is to generate current and relevant reports and case studies on a wide range of progressive beneficial practices, as well as benchmarked effective and efficiency 'best practices' in the delivery of key service to the public.

This will be achieved by:

1. Entering into contracts with Associations whose members are experts in service areas to obtain and review Municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP) and other data and to undertake specific research/projects that investigate municipal practices.
2. Creating a set of assessment criteria that will assist in identifying the services that should be profiled by any contracted Association as well as the performance criteria for the contract's management.
3. Identifying and capturing beneficial practices that municipalities have implemented. (e.g., information from the federal gas tax program; WDO Continuous Improvement Fund; FCM's Infraguide.)
4. Preparing reports for posting that capture both investigated/verified best practices as well as beneficial practices.
5. Capturing useful and commonly accepted information on inter-jurisdictional municipal best/beneficial management practices.
6. Identifying the practices behind the service excellence, innovation and recognition awards available to municipalities.

7. Investigating and facilitating appropriate best/beneficial practices networking, presentations and dialoguing opportunities.
8. Developing a user-friendly Website by:
 - Exploring Municom/MIDAS opportunities to enhance information and knowledge transfer.
 - Identifying and linking to other jurisdictions/associations' practice information.
 - Seeking feedback to monitor and evaluate the utility of the website.
 - Pursuing a search engine that can comb the best practices data bases of associations.
9. Developing and implementing a comprehensive Promotion and Communications Strategy.
10. Seeking ways to distribute information in the absence of broadband service to parts of Ontario.
11. Preparing an on-going, sustainable business plan for OMKN.
12. Preparing OMKN's own performance measurement and tracking system to monitor its activities and outcomes related to the mission, vision and goals of the Network.
13. Preparing annual report, including achievements and financial statements, as well a review of the Network's terms of reference and related work activities.

The Network will operate primarily as a virtual resource site for municipalities (i.e., access would be via the internet; however OMKN will seek ways to distribute information in the absence of broadband service to parts of Ontario)

Governance and Accountability:

The OMKN resides within AMO as part of its operational and management structure. As such, AMO has the governance and accountability requirements for OMKN. It is supported by AMO's administration and technical staff that will be responsible for the Network, including AMO's IT framework. AMO will enter into and manage all contracts related to the OMKN.

The work and oversight of the OMKN will respect the contractual arrangements between AMO and MMAH and will be guided by these Terms of Reference.

Resources:

Funding for the OMKN is being provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) as per agreement between the Ministry and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). That Agreement sets out the conditions imposed on AMO for the use and reporting of the Funds, including the approval of budget and reporting. The agreement does not preclude the development of other sources of revenue to help OMKN to meet its mandate.

The resources will be directed toward the 'new' activities that are geared to broadening and enhancing the OMKN's reach and content.

The Network will receive all MPMP annual municipal results. It will also receive and utilize data from OMBI, other benchmarking

initiatives, and industry associations. This data will be shared with the Associations Advisory Council and any contracted associations for analysis in developing best practice reports for review and publication.

AMO's Municipal Information Data Analysis System (MIDAS) has contractual arrangements with MMAH concerning the transfer of Municipal Financial Information Return data once the data has undergone the customary checks for accuracy and integrity. MIDAS provides municipal governments with a tool that allows them to track their own year-over-year service area data to monitor trends and improvements. It also allows municipalities to access the data sets of other municipalities to undertake cross jurisdictional analysis with comparable municipalities.

OMKN Oversight Committee

An Oversight Committee comprised of an equal number of members from the principal partners, AMO and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will oversee and monitor the OMKN Agreement in relation to the mandate, activities and resources of the Network. The Oversight Committee will seek the input and advice of Associations whose members are the practitioners and consumers of beneficial/best practices.

The Oversight Committee will prepare an annual report that will be submitted to AMO's Board of Directors and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and made available to all Ontario municipalities. The annual report will articulate the Network's

goals and its achievements including an annual financial statement for its fiscal year.

Associations Advisory Committee

- Historically AMCTO, MFOA, OGRA, OMAA and OMBI have fulfilled an advisory function and their participation and support in the future can be served through an Associations Advisory Committee). The Committee will be consulted by the Oversight Committee in terms of: pursuing expanded collaboration and coordination of practices;
- identifying priority areas and approaches for desired content; and
- combing data bases of participating associations for a one-window approach to practices information as a service to municipal customers.

The Committee will also consider the involvement of others (e.g., academia) and additional association participants in the pursuit of practices that would support municipal government in service delivery.

Joint meetings of the Oversight Committee and the Advisory Committee will be held at least twice yearly to seek input from the Advisory Committee regarding the OMKN work-plan, priorities and future directions as well as feedback on how well the Network is meeting its Terms of Reference and the role of the Advisory Committee itself.