



STAGE FOUR: Regained Momentum (2015–2021)
Strategy 2030 and beyond: stronger, better, faster ADB

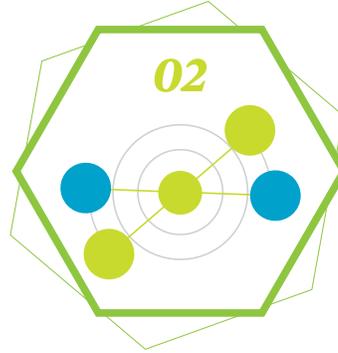
2015 to 2018

01

Midterm review of Strategy 2030 points the way

ADB's knowledge management journey picked up speed with the introduction of the country knowledge plan, designating the country director as knowledge custodian.

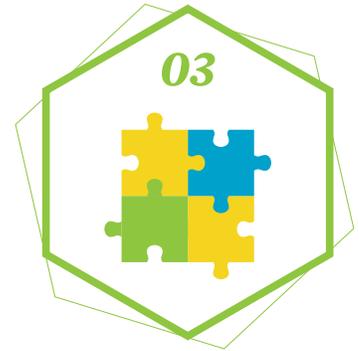
02



The shift to sector and thematic groups

The sector and thematic groups empowered to work closely with sector committees in ADBs' regional departments.

03



Strategy 2030 strengthens ADB as a knowledge provider

Need for high-level strategic guidance on knowledge management and integration with finance and partnerships recognized.

2018 to 2021

04



Work begins on ADB's innovation framework

While knowledge management was seen in previous years as a tool to increase efficiency, the focus shifted from managing knowledge to implementing innovation.

05

A plan for collaboration, relevance and impact

The new Knowledge Management Action Plan 2021–2025 determines concrete actions to continue to align knowledge management with Strategy 2030.





Strategy 2030, released in 2018, states that

ADB will strengthen its role as a knowledge provider. ADB will work closely with DMCs to identify their needs and produce the most relevant knowledge products and services. It will incentivize staff to integrate the best available knowledge with financing and institutional capacity building throughout the operational cycle. ADB will proactively engage in research, provide high quality policy advice to DMCs, strengthen DMCs' institutional capacity in addressing development issues.

ADB's research is showcased annually during ERCD's Economists' Forum. This raises the profile and quality of ADB's research, aligns it with Strategy 2030 priorities, shares knowledge across the bank, and facilitates collaborative research work.

In 2015, after a midterm review of Strategy 2020, ADB's knowledge management journey picked up speed, with the introduction of the country knowledge plan, designating the country director as knowledge custodian. Each country knowledge plan reflects a DMC's knowledge priorities considering its specific circumstances and needs. Since then, a country knowledge plan has been appended to each CPS, and is operationalized through a pipeline of knowledge products and services reflected in the country operations and business plan.

The Midterm Review of Strategy 2020 noted that majority of the DMCs were transitioning to middle-income status and thus had improved their institutional capacity, and their needs were diversifying.¹ As a result these DMCs were expecting ADB to respond to their changing needs.²

In 2014, ADB's then-president Takehiko Nakao announced his intention for ADB to become "stronger, better, and faster" and pressure mounted to really inculcate the vision of "One ADB" across departments and between ADB headquarters and its resident missions. Becoming a stronger knowledge institution meant ADB needed clearer, high-level strategic guidance on knowledge management, and a more systemic feedback mechanism for addressing the needs of DMCs.

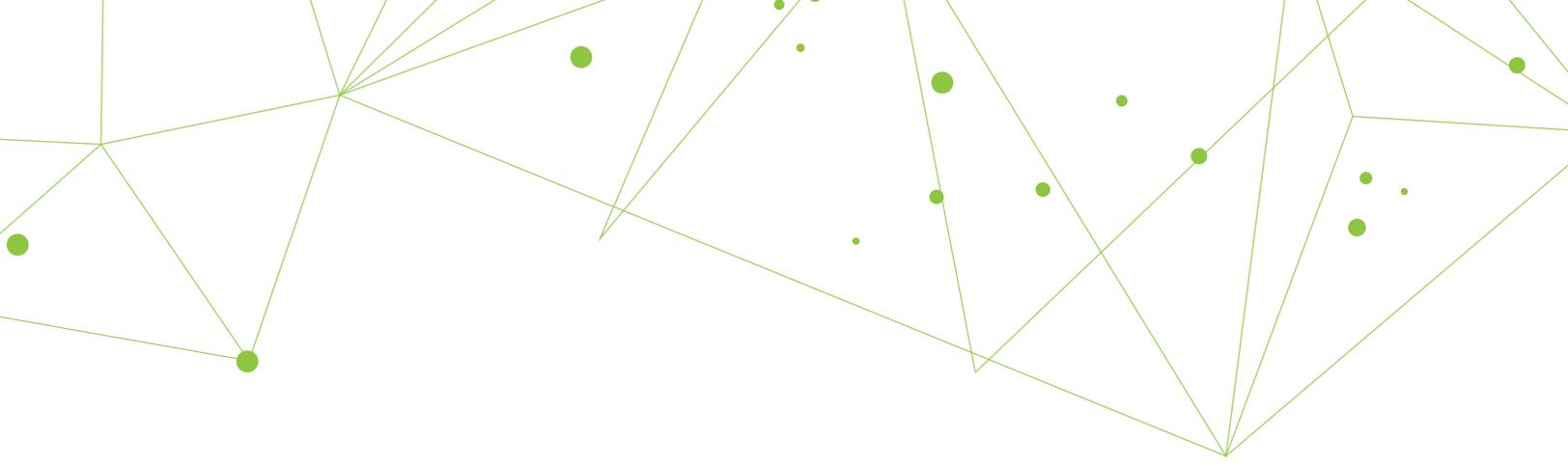
In response to these challenges, in 2018 ADB implemented Strategy 2030, which aims to strengthen ADB's role as a knowledge provider. The strategy also promises to "incentivize staff to integrate the best available knowledge with financing and institutional capacity building throughout the operational cycle."³ It highlights the bank's approach, which integrates finance, knowledge, and partnership in its operations.

To align their functions more closely with operations, the communities of practice were reconstituted into sector and thematic groups (STGs) in 2015. The STGs had more flexible budgets and have since been empowered to work closely with sector committees in the bank's regional departments.

¹ ADB. 2014. Review of Medium-Term Strategy 2020: Meeting the Challenge of a Transforming Asia and the Pacific. Manila. (<https://bit.ly/3DXwe6D>)

² McCawley, P. 2017. Banking on the Future of Asia and the Pacific: 50 Years of the Asian Development Bank. Manila. (<https://bit.ly/3GXacmL>)

³ ADB. 2018. Strategy 2030, Achieving a Prosperous, Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Asia and the Pacific. Manila. (<https://bit.ly/3mOozjW>)



Several initiatives were introduced to improve knowledge management and sharing. Cross-department assignments were instigated through a mobility framework, staff exchanges, and short-term assignments. In 2016, flexible position management was introduced to optimize deployment of staff; enhance skills, knowledge sharing, and collaboration; and promote career and staff satisfaction. An experts' pool was introduced to complement staff competence in emerging project areas such as disaster risk finance and smart cities. At the same time, resident mission staff were expanded to foster country-focused operations. There was also an increasing focus on knowledge partnerships. An Independent Evaluation Department (IED) study on the effectiveness of partnerships led to the creation of the Partnership Toolbox in 2019 and the Partnership Portal in 2020. ICT modernization continued, incorporating new systems for nonsovereign operations and management of partner funds. The new ICT systems support ongoing improvements in knowledge management. Their resilience and agility were tested when the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in the new normal of doing business remotely, requiring real-time collaboration during work-from-home arrangements.

Work on ADB's innovation framework started in 2018. While knowledge management was seen in previous years as a tool to increase efficiency, the focus shifted from managing knowledge to implementing innovation. In 2020, an IED special evaluation study highlighted a new set of focus areas including

- providing impactful knowledge solutions;
- increasing collaboration and reducing knowledge silos;
- enhancing relevance and quality of knowledge;
- building knowledge management capacity in resident missions and country teams; and
- optimizing the contribution and learning of staff, consultants, and partners to the organization.⁴

Drawing on these focus areas and building on other initiatives including operational reviews and the innovation framework, the new Knowledge Management Action Plan 2021–2025⁵ determines concrete actions to continue to align knowledge management with Strategy 2030.

⁴ ADB. 2020. Knowledge Solutions for Development: An Evaluation of ADB's Readiness for Strategy 2030. (<https://bit.ly/3o7Jyim>)

⁵ ADB. 2021. Knowledge Management Action Plan 2021–2025. (<https://bit.ly/3DMJD1b>) Manila.