

APQC SPONSORED RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The APQC sponsored research program is a fee-based opportunity for our professional services firms, associations, and technology providers to sponsor and participate in APQC research. This program allows you to gain unparalleled access to this learning and APQC's data, research, and audience.

Showcase your firm as a thought leader on any of these currently available topics below. The links below will provide you a project description.

Financial Management Projects:

- ◆ [Building a Best-in-Class Finance Function](#)
- ◆ [FM Priorities and Challenges](#)
- ◆ [Improving Accounts Payable Benchmarking and Processes](#)

Human Capital Management Projects:

- ◆ [Benchmarking Management Layers and Spans of Control](#)
- ◆ [Making the Digital Workforce Transition](#)

Knowledge Management Projects:

- ◆ [Achieving Knowledge Management Maturity and Business Impact From KM](#)
- ◆ [Impact of AI and Advanced Technologies of Knowledge Management](#)

- ◆ [Knowledge Management Benchmarks and Metrics](#)
- ◆ [Knowledge Mapping in Action](#)
- ◆ [Managing Project Knowledge](#)
- ◆ [Next-Generation Communities of Practice](#)

Supply Chain Management Projects:

- ◆ [Procurement Benchmarks and Best Practices](#)

Process and Performance Management Projects:

- ◆ [Electric Utilities Peer Group](#)
- ◆ [Key Considerations for Process Automation](#)
- ◆ [Operation KPIs That Matter](#)
- ◆ [Paradigm Shift: The Changing Face of Process Management](#)

For more information about the benefits and deliverables included in sponsoring APQC research, click [here](#) or contact Cathy Hill at chill@apqc.org or +1-713-685-4652.

ACHIEVING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT MATURITY AND BUSINESS IMPACT FROM KM

APQC provides many tools to guide the development and improvement of knowledge management (KM) programs. One of the most important is its Levels of Knowledge Management Maturity, a five-stage maturity model designed to help organizations determine the current status of their KM programs. The Levels of KM Maturity form the basis for APQC's

KM Capability Assessment Tool, which shows participants their current maturity level and helps them uncover gaps that may impede the efficacy of KM initiatives.

To date, more than 200 KM programs have evaluated their performance and progress using the KM Capability Assessment Tool. In 2016-2017, APQC is conducting further research to explore the path to KM maturity, the effect of the assessment process, and the factors that influence KM's ability to demonstrate tangible business impact.

The study team will analyze aggregate data from the Capability Assessment Tool to determine the KM capabilities most likely to predict whether an organization can leverage knowledge for competitive advantage and demonstrate ongoing evidence of business impact from KM efforts. The analysis will also attempt to connect KM maturity to publically available data on financial performance to identify any trends.

In addition to this analysis, the study team will interview KM leaders at organizations that have participated in APQC's Capability Assessment Tool over the past two years. Some interviews will spotlight KM programs that have achieved Maturity Levels 4 and 5; these will focus on the organizations' KM journeys and the critical success factors for building mature KM capabilities. Other case studies will highlight less mature KM programs, highlighting key milestones achieved to date as well as ongoing challenges and plans to overcome them.

All the interviews will address why the organizations opted to complete the assessment; what they learned; and whether they have used the results to communicate with leadership, promote their success, or make meaningful changes within their KM programs. To read more, [click here](#).

BENCHMARKING MANAGEMENT LAYERS AND SPANS OF CONTROL

Finding the most efficient and effective organizational structure is a common business challenge. At APQC, we are frequently asked:

- ◆ What is the ideal number of direct reports for a manager?
- ◆ What is the appropriate number of management layers for an organization?
- ◆ Are organizations really flattening: reducing the number of managers and increasing spans of control?

This APQC study will collect benchmarks on direct reports and management layers. It will explore the relationship between these aspects of organizational structure and various business and human capital performance outcomes. Data will be collected for different organizational functions, such as HR, finance, and procurement, as well as for different industries. The results will help professionals make organizational design and redesign decisions that maximize efficiency, productivity, and cost effectiveness.

To read more, [click here](#).

BUILDING A BEST-IN-CLASS FINANCE FUNCTION

A growing number of organizations are streamlining and automating financial management processes to transform their finance function from one that merely reports on the past, to one that works with the business to plan for the future. APQC is conducting primary, qualitative research to learn more from these top-performing organizations, the critical success factors enabling their finance transformation efforts, and how they have built best-in-class finance functions. To read more, [click here](#).

ELECTRIC UTILITIES PEER GROUP

Leveraging the [APQC Process Classification Framework \(PCF\) - Utilities - Excel Version 7.0.5](#), APQC would like to explore the creation of an interactive peer group for Electric Utilities focused on operational process improvement and benchmarking. As utilities evolve, their focus on operational efficiency is growing. There is a need for unique operational benchmarks and metrics that are not currently available today.

The focus of the group discussion will be operational assets and data, specifically sections *10.0 Acquire, Construct, and Manage Assets* and *14.0 Operate Utility Assets* in the industry process framework. To read more, [click here](#).

FM PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

APQC is conducting an annual financial management priorities and trends survey focused on understanding the key priorities and challenges of financial management practitioners for 2018. The survey covers the following areas:

- ♦ priorities and challenges across multiple finance topics;
- ♦ impact of trends, innovations, and developments on financial management;
- ♦ obstacles to improving financial management processes; and
- ♦ expectations for 2018 budgets for financial management tools, approaches, and initiatives.

To read more, [click here](#).

IMPACT OF AI AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

We are on the brink of a paradigm shift involving the fundamental human processes that guide information discovery, insight extraction, problem solving, and decision making. Cognitive computing and predictive analytics are just starting to permeate our personal and professional lives and transform how we learn and interact in the digital world.

The purpose of this study is to synthesize current thinking and experiences regarding the application of emerging digital and “smart” technologies in the discipline of knowledge management. Key topics include digital and cloud platforms, virtual/augmented reality, intelligent content curation and search, text and predictive analytics, automation and bots, machine learning, anticipatory knowledge delivery, and AI/cognitive computing.

To read more, [click here](#).

IMPROVING ACCOUNTS PAYABLE BENCHMARKING AND PROCESSES

APQC has an [ongoing Open Standards Benchmarking® data collection in accounts payable and expense reimbursement](#) with more than 2,000 submissions collected to-date. This metrics data collection effort gathers in-depth metrics (cost, productivity, effectiveness/effectiveness, and cycle time) as well as practices data for accounts payable. APQC plans to supplement this data collection with additional primary, qualitative, case study research to further understand the drivers of performance and best practices in accounts payable and gather examples, tools, and templates that organizations can use to help improve their accounts payable functions. To read more, [click here](#).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROCESS AUTOMATION

What started as efforts to improve customer satisfaction and productivity through automation in manufacturing, marketing, and contact centers has now moved into high value and high risk areas like finance and HR.

Though the opportunities seem unlimited, organizations continue to struggle with effectively implementing process automation. What criteria help organizations determine which processes will benefit from automation? What capabilities and skillsets are foundational to make sure automation projects are done right the first time?

This project will explore what key factors organizations need to consider to effectively implement process automation. To read more, [click here](#).

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT BENCHMARKS AND METRICS

Regular benchmarking is critical for knowledge management (KM) initiatives. Benchmarking allows KM teams to identify where they have room for improvement, envision what's possible, and identify concrete steps to get there. This is why KM programs that benchmark are 3.5 times more likely to be aligned with the business vision and strategy and 5.5 times more likely to address barriers to knowledge sharing and use.

APQC has provided benchmarking opportunities in KM for more than 20 years, but in 2018 it is releasing its first large-scale quantitative metrics on KM program performance. This project combines carefully validated data from more than 300 KM programs to reveal:

- ♦ the scope and structure of today's enterprise KM efforts,
- ♦ the funds and resources allocated to KM, σ the tools and approaches in place to enable the flow of knowledge, and
- ♦ how value is measured and communicated.

This ongoing data collection and analysis effort will allow individual organizations to benchmark their KM programs in order to guide future investments and strategic decisions. APQC will also analyze the collective data set to pinpoint drivers of long-term KM program success.

To read more, [click here](#).

KNOWLEDGE MAPPING IN ACTION

APQC defines a knowledge map as a visual representation of an organization's internal and/or external knowledge resources. Organizations use knowledge mapping to think through strategic needs, business processes, job roles, and/or domains of expertise in order to document the composition and flow of critical data, information, and knowledge related the predetermined scope area.

For many years, APQC has provided templates for knowledge mapping and helped guide organizations through mapping activities. This project is designed to identify best practices for applying established mapping techniques in real-world scenarios. The research team will study knowledge mapping "in action" at a range of firms to understand how mapping processes are adapted to fit different scenarios and how the completed maps are used for business benefit. To read more, [click here](#).

MAKING THE DIGITAL WORKFORCE TRANSITION

Digital technologies such as analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), social, mobile, robotics, blockchain, and the internet of things (IoT) are driving organizations to rethink business models and processes for new or improved ways to grow revenue. Successfully implementing digital strategies hinges not only on having access to top technology talent, but also on having non-technology workers prepared and willing to embrace digitally enhanced or changed ways of working.

Leaders of APQC member organizations recognize this need and are seeking to understand how to go about building a digitally-savvy workforce. This research will identify the workforce issues that large global organizations face as they embark on digital transformation initiatives. It will explore practices for developing, organizing, and engaging non-IT workers in digitally-driven change. To read more, [click here](#).

MANAGING PROJECT KNOWLEDGE

One frequently overlooked benefit of complex, large-scale projects is the wealth of knowledge they generate. As a project team moves a project toward completion, it constantly discovers new contextual information, better ways of doing things, and less successful methods that other teams should avoid. By insisting that project teams document and share what they learn, organizations can ensure that relevant best practices and lessons are applied in other, similar projects and situations. This both helps sustain project benefits over time and amplifies the impact of projects beyond their envisioned range of influence.

Despite the inherent value of knowledge transfer within and among project teams, many project management approaches fail to account for the effective handling of project-related knowledge. In a recent survey, APQC asked project management professionals about the hard and soft skills their project management offices (PMOs) currently lack, but need to develop in the near term. Of the 18 skills included on the survey, knowledge management (KM) was cited as the most common area of need, with 49.5 percent of respondents reporting that their PMOs lack KM skills and need to develop them in the next two years.

To help project management teams and offices build the right KM capabilities, APQC is pursuing new research exploring the intersection of knowledge and project management. This research will focus on how organizations leverage KM approaches such as communities of practice, enterprise social networking, lessons learned methods, collaboration platforms, and content repositories to support project management methodologies and processes.

The study team will interview at least three organizations with mature initiatives to handle project-related knowledge in order to understand how KM is incorporated into each stage of project management, what KM approaches are most effective, and what enterprise-level support is required. After conducting the interviews, the research team will look across the collected information to identify themes and applicable best practices.

To read more, [click here](#).

NEXT-GENERATION COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

APQC defines a community of practice as a group of people who come together, either face-to-face or virtually, to share and learn from one another. Although communities vary widely in scope and duration, most are organized around a common interest in a topic, challenge, opportunity, or body of knowledge and allow members to come together to share problems, experiences, insights, best practices, and tools.

APQC CEO Carla O'Dell describes communities of practice as knowledge management's "killer app," or the one indispensable approach that helps KM engage employees and deliver value. This is, at least in part, because communities provide an organizing framework for a wide array of KM activities, from gathering and disseminating content to expertise location and networking. Communities connect members to information and one another, and they also provide a place where knowledgeable people can hammer out best practices and solutions relevant to a specific knowledge domain.

Over the past 15 years, APQC has conducted four large-scale studies on communities of practice and identified dozens of best practices related to building and sustaining effective communities. However, as technology and work norms evolve, we must consider whether classic community structures still deliver the same value they did a decade ago. Do communities retain pride of place in the KM toolkit, or have new tools for enterprise social networking and collaboration shifted the landscape?

This study will reassess established best practices for communities, including:

- ◆ the strategic role of communities and the business objectives they aim to achieve;
- ◆ community roles and responsibilities, including the factors that drive effective leadership;
- ◆ approaches to connect community members with knowledge and expertise;
- ◆ methods to encourage engagement and participation; and
- ◆ methods to define and measure success.

In this context, the research team will focus on how innovative technologies have influenced community platforms, norms, and structures. Key topics include:

- ◆ the infrastructure that supports today's communities of practice;

- ◆ how enterprise social networking platforms, mobile apps, and tools for collaborative content creation have affected community interactions and knowledge sharing; and
- ◆ whether the ubiquity of social networking in people's personal lives has affected how community members engage, share, and interact.

To read more, [click here](#).

OPERATIONS KPIS THAT MATTER

As organizations continue to put greater emphasis on facts-based decision making, ensuring relevant measures and timely access to data becomes increasingly important. Often organizations will pinpoint a handful of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to gauge the organization's operational performance. However picking and aligning the "right" KPIs to the organization's goals is often easier said than done. How many measures should organizations use? What's the right balance of organization-specific measures to reflect goals and competitive strengths versus industry standard measures that enable benchmarking? What measurement and reporting practices do organizations need to engage in to ensure effective decision making? This project will explore the KPIs organizations use to manage operations, their alignment to organizational goals, and the role that measures and reporting make on the decision-making process. To read more, [click here](#).

PARADIGM SHIFT: THE CHANGING FACE OF PROCESS MANAGEMENT

There is a growing sentiment that times have changed and that business process management needs to adjust to keep up. There are a myriad number of reasons for this sentiment ranging from stagnating methodologies that haven't changed substantially since the 90s to the growing digitalization of our organizations. However one thing is very clear organizations require fast paced changes that incorporate or at the very least integrate with new technologies (e.g., automation, machine learning, and AI) and opportunities.

In our recent research on process automation APQC found that business process management is potentially more important than ever before. Process management has many of the foundational skills to support organizations' efforts in the digital age. However the parallel sentiment on the need for change sparks several questions. Is there an actual need for change? What is driving the need to change and is it the same across industries? What capabilities need to be maintained and what new ones need to be developed?

This project will explore the changing business environment's impact on business process management and discern the critical skillsets and techniques necessary to not only stay relevant but provide additional value to the organization.

To read more, [click here](#).

PROCUREMENT BENCHMARKS AND BEST PRACTICES

Successful procurement operations are viewed as strategic functions within their organizations. [APQC's Blueprint for Success: Procurement](#) is designed to provide an in-depth resource for

organizations seeking to engage in procurement process improvement, cost savings, increased customer satisfaction, and overall achieve best-practice performance. The *Blueprint* will include:

- ♦ a framework for procurement activities and how they relate to the enterprise;
- ♦ key measures for cost effectiveness, cycle time, process efficiency, and staff productivity;
- ♦ the latest benchmarks for performance; and σ case studies demonstrating how leading organizations have achieved their performance levels.

The case studies are designed to understand the drivers and practices behind the top performance of successful procurement organizations.

To read more, [click here](#).

For more information, contact Cathy Hill at chill@apqc.org or +1-713-685-4652.

ABOUT APQC

APQC helps organizations work smarter, faster, and with greater confidence. It is the world's foremost authority in benchmarking, best practices, process and performance improvement, and knowledge management. APQC's unique structure as a member-based nonprofit makes it a differentiator in the marketplace. APQC partners with more than 500 member organizations worldwide in all industries. With more than 40 years of experience, APQC remains the world's leader in transforming organizations. Visit us at www.apqc.org, and learn how you can make best practices your practices.