

National Governmental
Knowledge Management
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By

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Old, Old Knowledge Management

- ▶ KM as old as self-conscious human beings
- ▶ The first time a human used a method or tool to improve their capacity to solve problems or communicate their solutions, she or he was ***doing KM***, even though there was no word to label ***activities intended to enhance knowledge processing***
- ▶ Every agency in National Government, every inter-agency project or program, and every individual, as well, performs some KM activity, and has always done so

Do We Need Formal KM In National Governments?

- ▶ With development of formal KM in late 1980s, the questions arise
 - Should we formally organize KM in the National Government?
 - If so, how should we formally organize it?
 - Which agencies, and inter-agency projects and programs ***can benefit from a formal KM structure*** and which can continue to be handled informally, through individual efforts and self-organizing group structures?
- ▶ Before beginning to answer these questions let's talk about the context of National KM

The Problem Context of National KM

- ▶ Enormous adaptive burdens on national knowledge processing presented as problems
 - Sustainable Economic Recovery and Re-investment
 - Declining Relative Health Care Quality
 - Growing Energy Dependence and Insecurity
 - Decline of the Educational System
 - Environmental Degradation and Global Warming
 - Growing Economic Inequality
 - Racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation inequality
 - The decline of constitutionalism and fairness in the administration of justice and the law

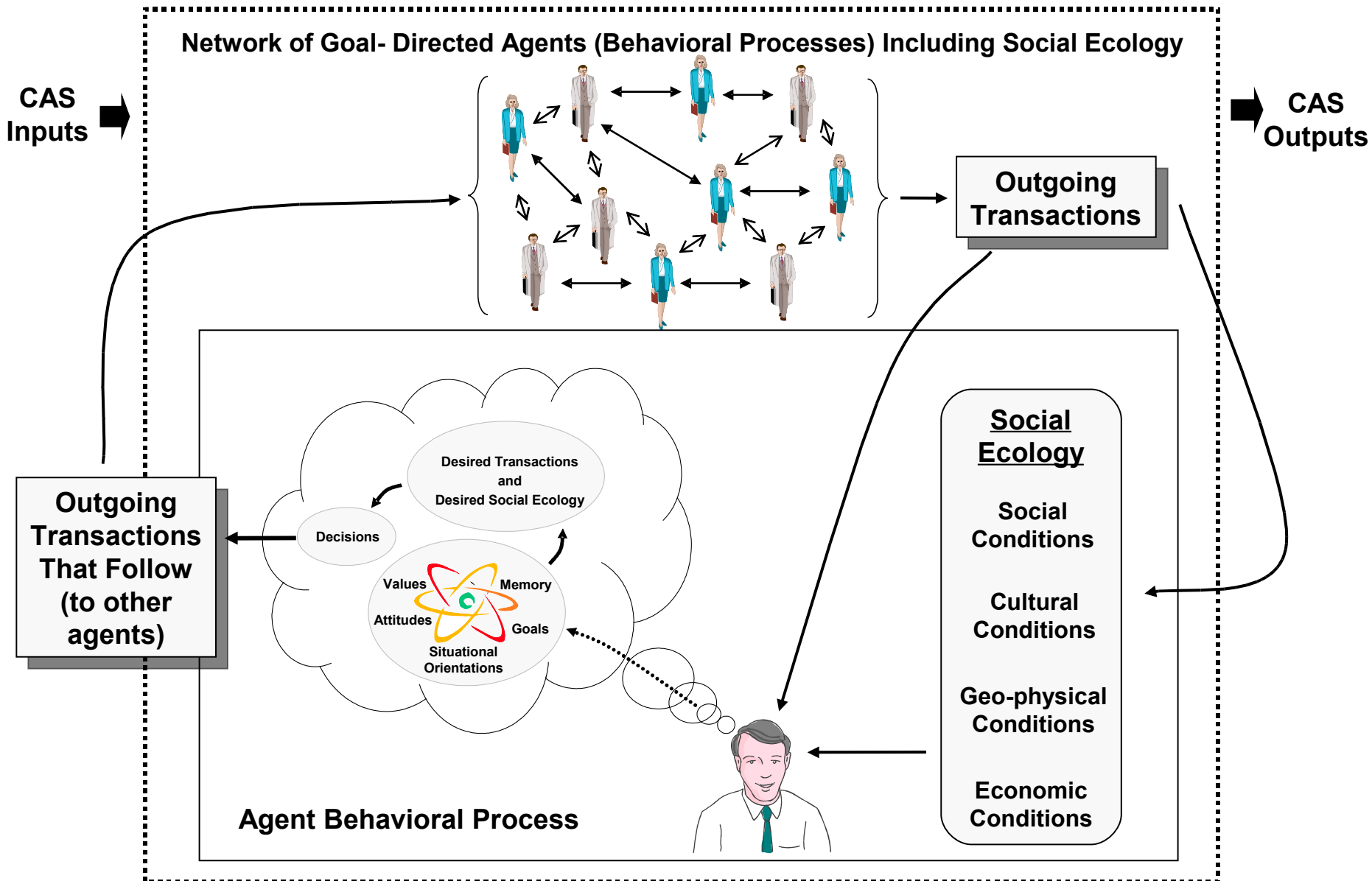
The Problem Context of National KM (2)

- ▶ Enormous adaptive burdens on national knowledge processing presented as problems (continued)
 - An immobilist political system increasingly resistant to continuous change and perfecting public policy over time
 - Increasingly chaotic relations with the international system and its major trends in economic globalization, emergent changes in economic and political power, and reactive protest activity
 - An immigration system that is largely broken
 - An increasingly serious border security problem
 - Whatever else I forgot to mention
- ▶ Problems have been accumulating for perhaps 40 years now
- ▶ We need to enhance our problem solving and solution sharing capability

The Organizational Context!

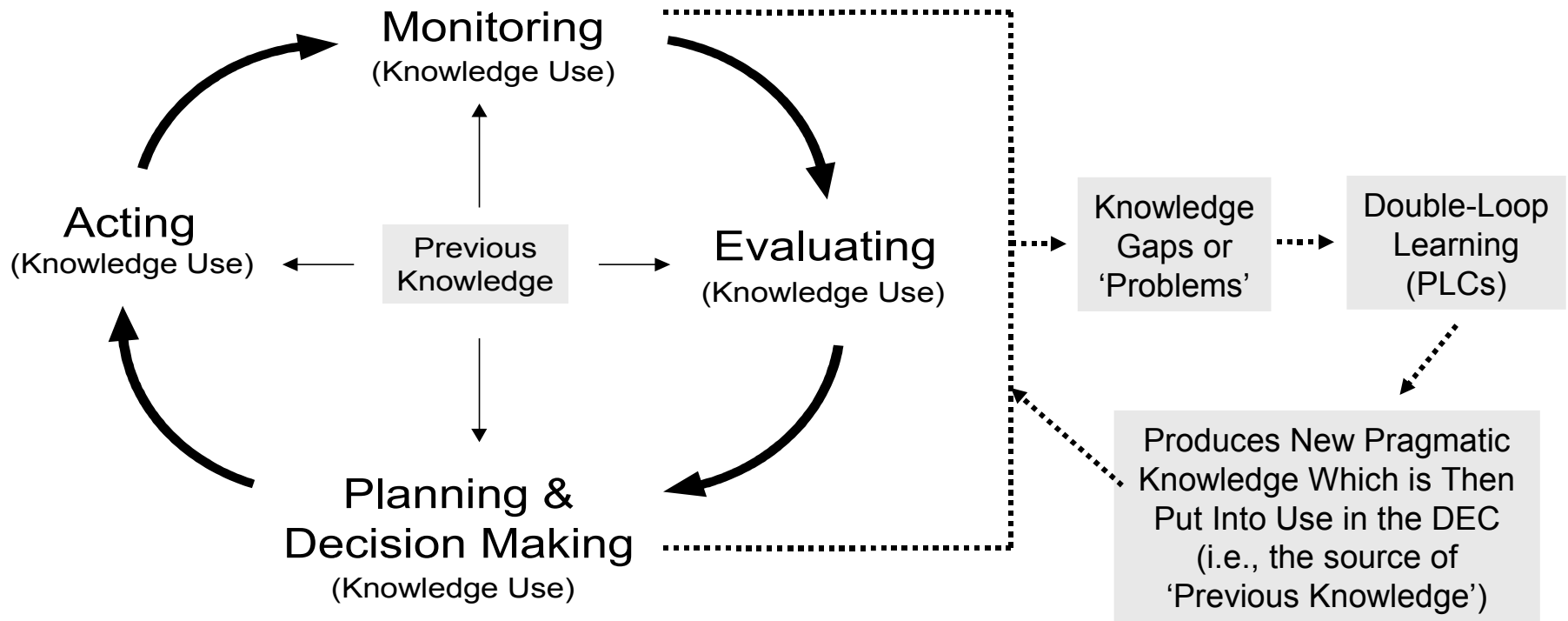
- ▶ ***Organizations are adaptive systems!***
- ▶ Like other CASs, they ***produce emergent behavior through self-organization of agents***
- ▶ Global Emergence/“***downward causation***”/constraints
- ▶ Organizational agents:
 - Act by using individually- and/or mutually-held knowledge to make adjustments
 - ***Produce knowledge*** through distributed problem solving
 - ***Learning is their adaptive strategy***

An Organizational CAS Network with Agents



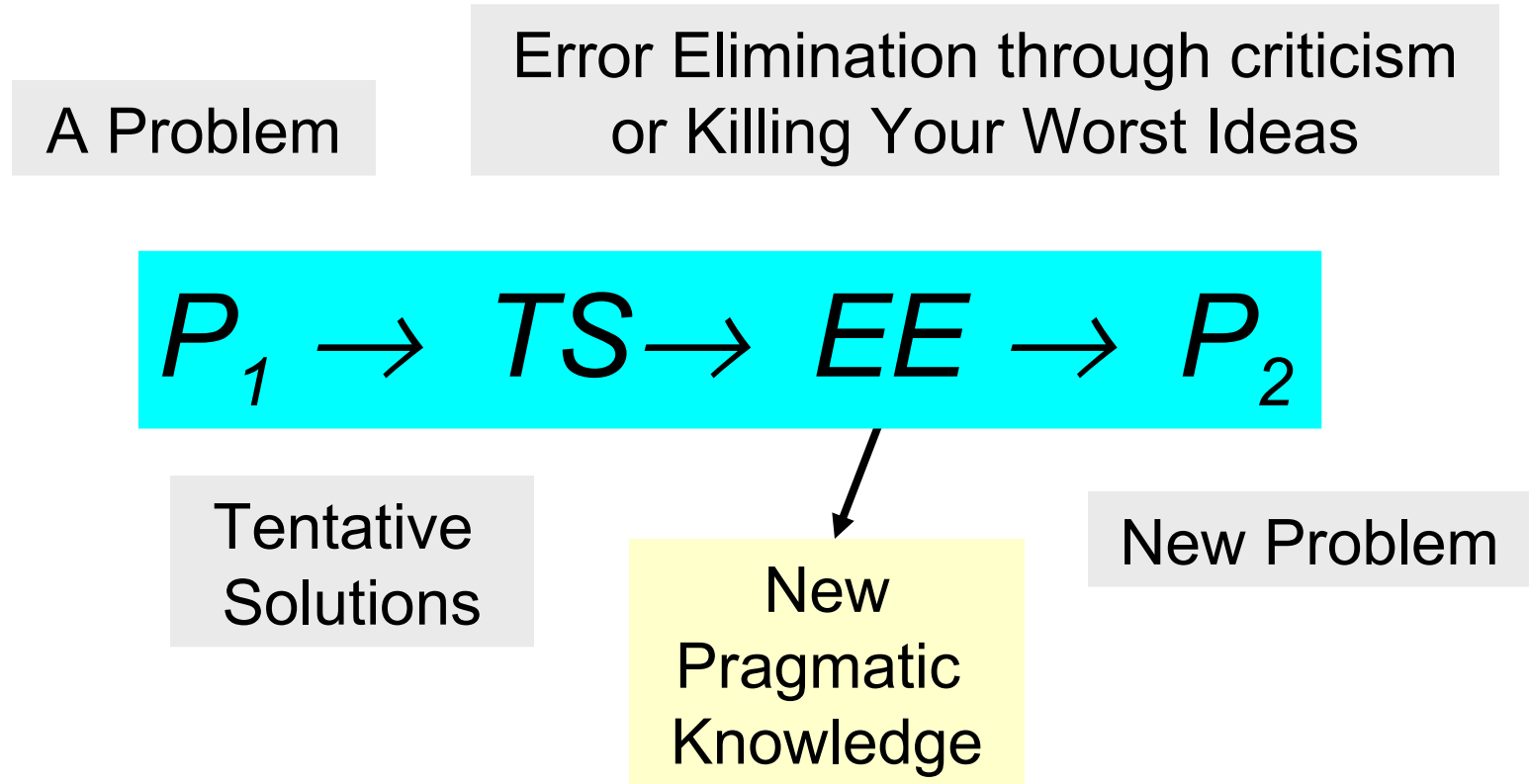
The Decision, Learning, and Knowledge Processing Context

Decision Cycles, Problems, and DLL



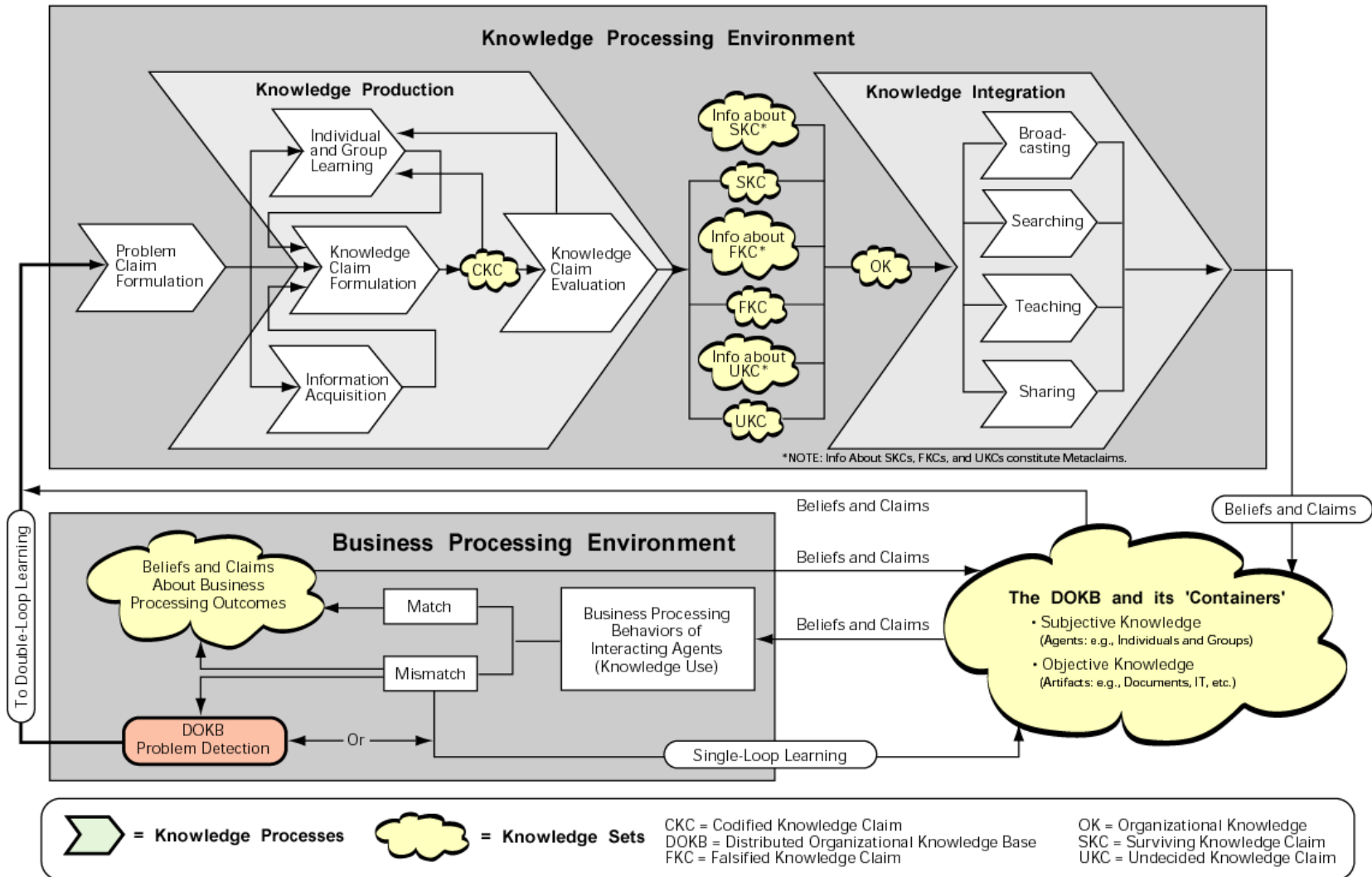
Sometimes problems arise, prompting episodes of Double-Loop Learning via the Problem Life Cycle

A Framework for Creative Learning and Adaptation



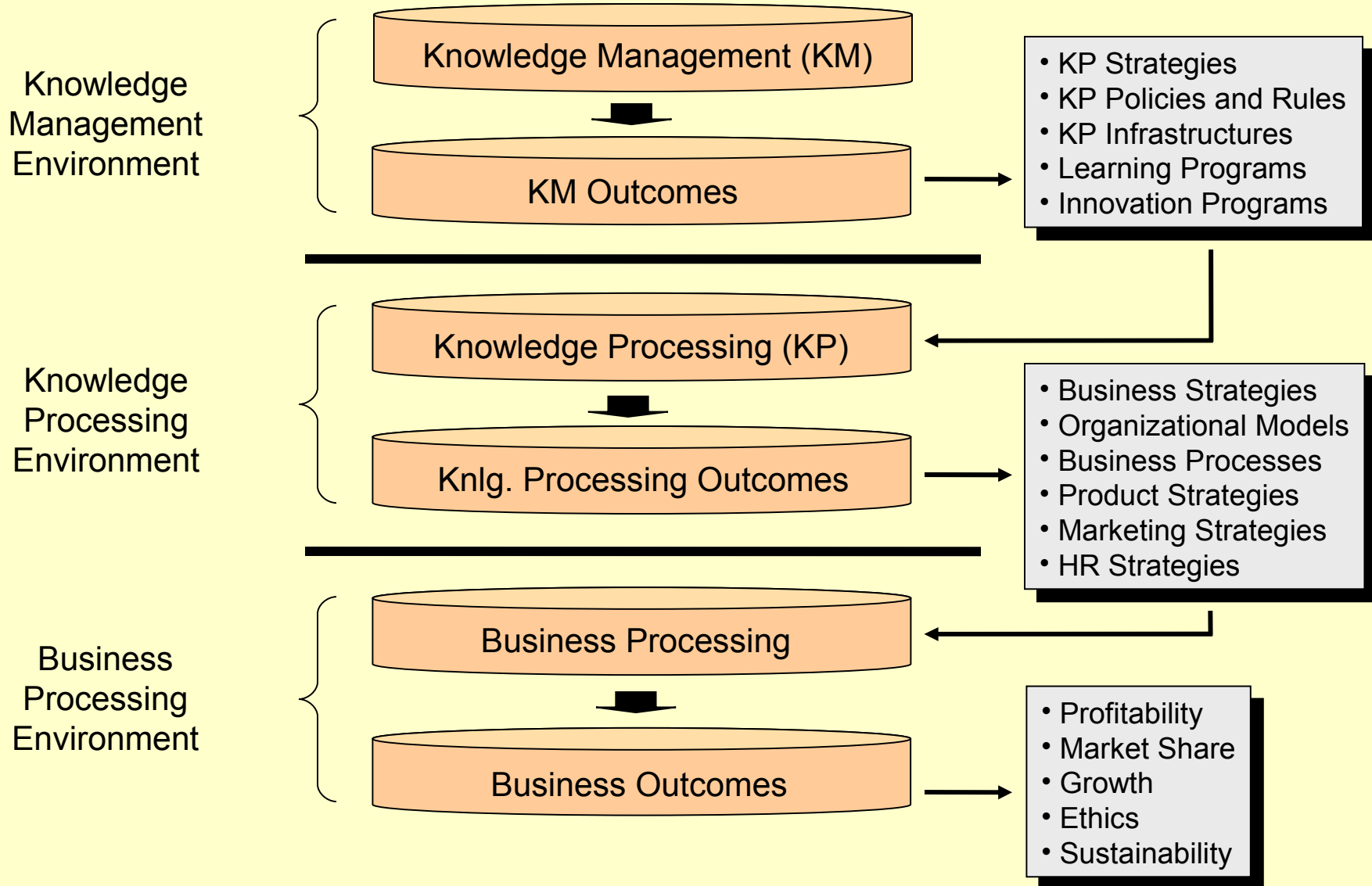
Getting this thing to run well is the end-game – indeed, the fundamental purpose – of Knowledge management!

The Knowledge Life Cycle (KLC)



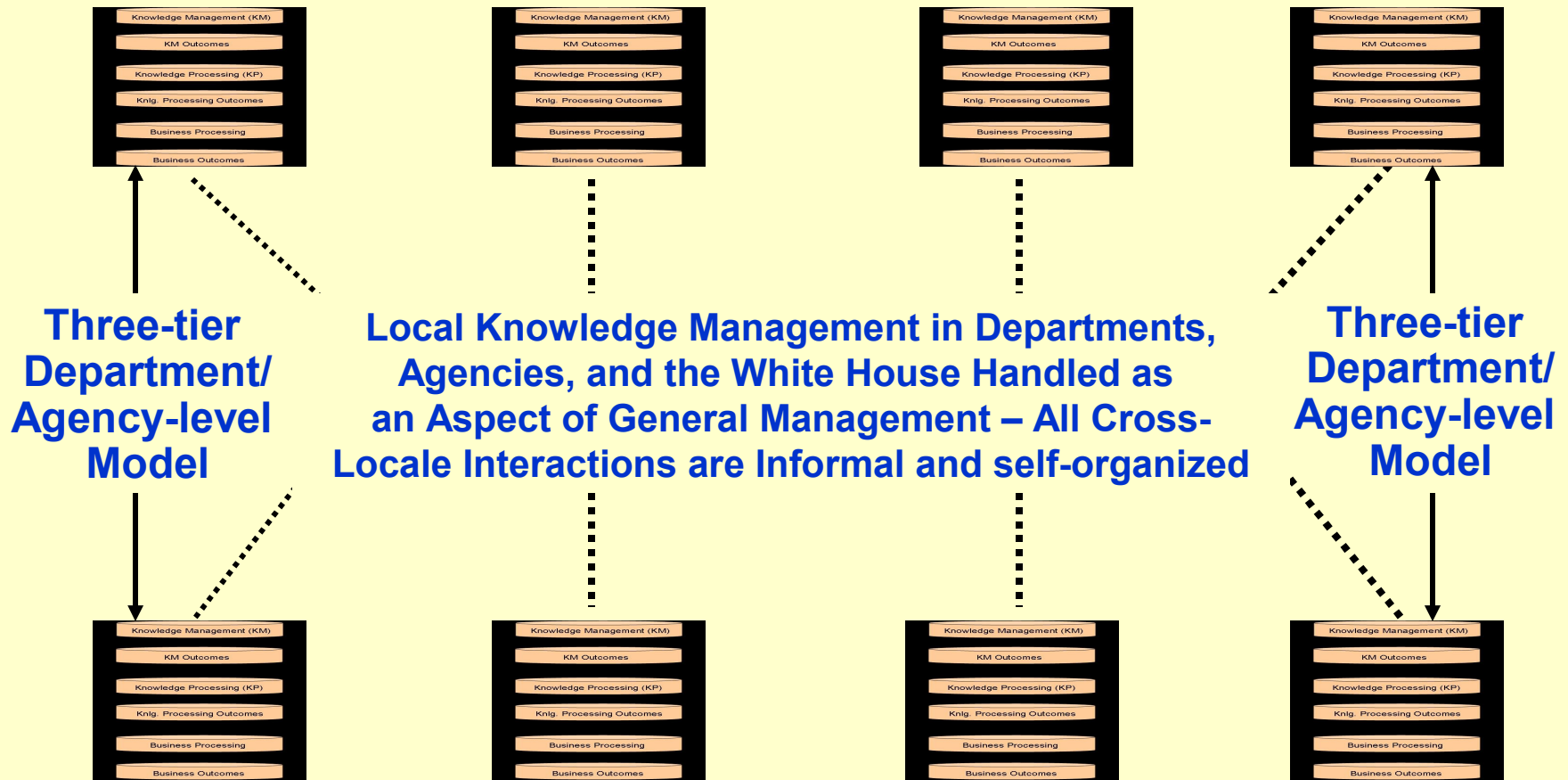
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The Three-tier Model



Some Alternatives for National KM

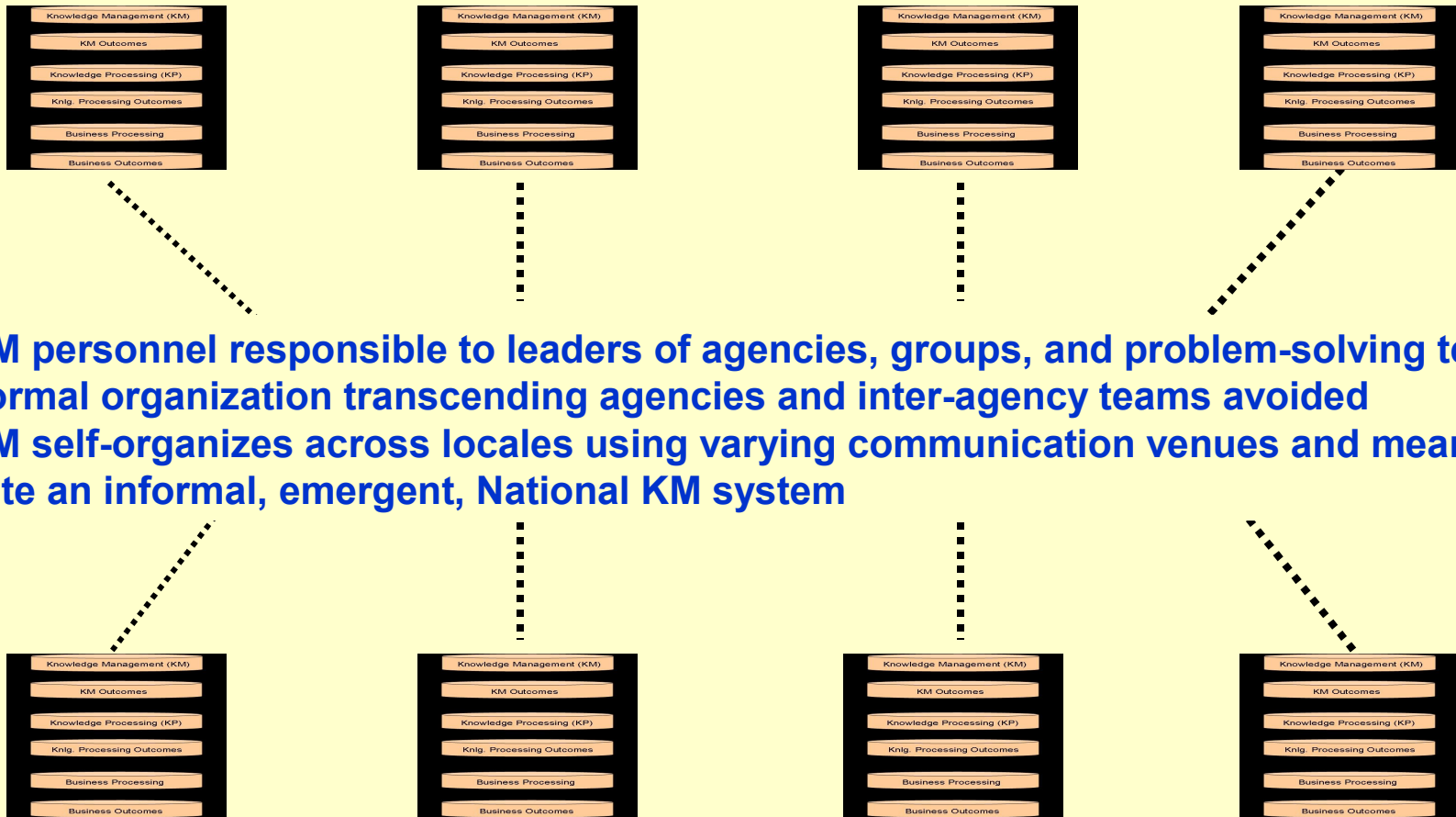
No Formal National KM Organization



No Formal KM?

- ▶ **Objection to Formal KM:** interferes with self-organization, distributed problem solving and creativity
- ▶ **Objection to Formal KM:** we can do nothing to either
 - intentionally construct an “ecology of rationality,” or
 - systematically disrupt other ecologies that undermine effective approaches to problem solving/knowledge making
- ▶ **Comeback:** Can’t establish an “ecology of rationality,” is a “self-fulfilling prophecy,” if we take as a rationale for not trying
- ▶ **Comeback:** Can’t disrupt harmful patterns

Formal, De-centralized, Local KM



- ▶ KM personnel responsible to leaders of agencies, groups, and problem-solving teams
- ▶ Formal organization transcending agencies and inter-agency teams avoided
- ▶ KM self-organizes across locales using varying communication venues and means to create an informal, emergent, National KM system

Formal, De-centralized, Local KM?

▶ *Advantages:*

- decentralization,
- some measure of distributed problem solving, and
- potential for self-organization and emergent National KM patterns across locales

▶ *Disadvantages*

- “The Strategy Exception Error”
- “Stovepiping,” “siloeing,” creating isolated “islands of information”
- Failure to recognize the fiduciary character of KM in National Governments

“The Strategy Exception Error”

- ▶ By subordinating KM personnel to local heads and chiefs, this alternative subordinates enhancing knowledge processing to strategy requirements
- ▶ But, strategy can be inconsistent with the adaptive function of KM, in that it may make no provision for enhancing the knowledge processing on which the content of strategy itself depends
- ▶ To avoid this, KM needs some autonomy from line authority, and an ability to define where knowledge processing in the locales needs to be enhanced

Stovepiping

- ▶ The formal, decentralized local KM pattern contains nothing formal to prevent “stove-piping,” and constant re-invention of the wheel in locale after locale
- ▶ It’s true that stove-piping can be reduced by encouraging and enabling self-organization across locales, including inter-agency teams
- ▶ But unless there’s a central authority to do this and to provide some enabling resources around which to self-organize, it won’t happen.

Failure to Recognize Fiduciary Character of KM

- ▶ Since adaptation is an essential function of Government, ***on which all else depends***, problem-solving/innovation performance ought to receive continual oversight from the Government's trustees
- ▶ Those trustees are legislators. It is their fiduciary responsibility to ensure that adaptive capacity and innovation performance can meet the severest challenges
- ▶ Under formal, decentralized local KM, there is no direct connection of KM personnel to fiduciaries, so line executives are free to interpret KM in terms of their everyday, routine needs, or their need to solve specific problems, rather than in terms of enhancing knowledge processing

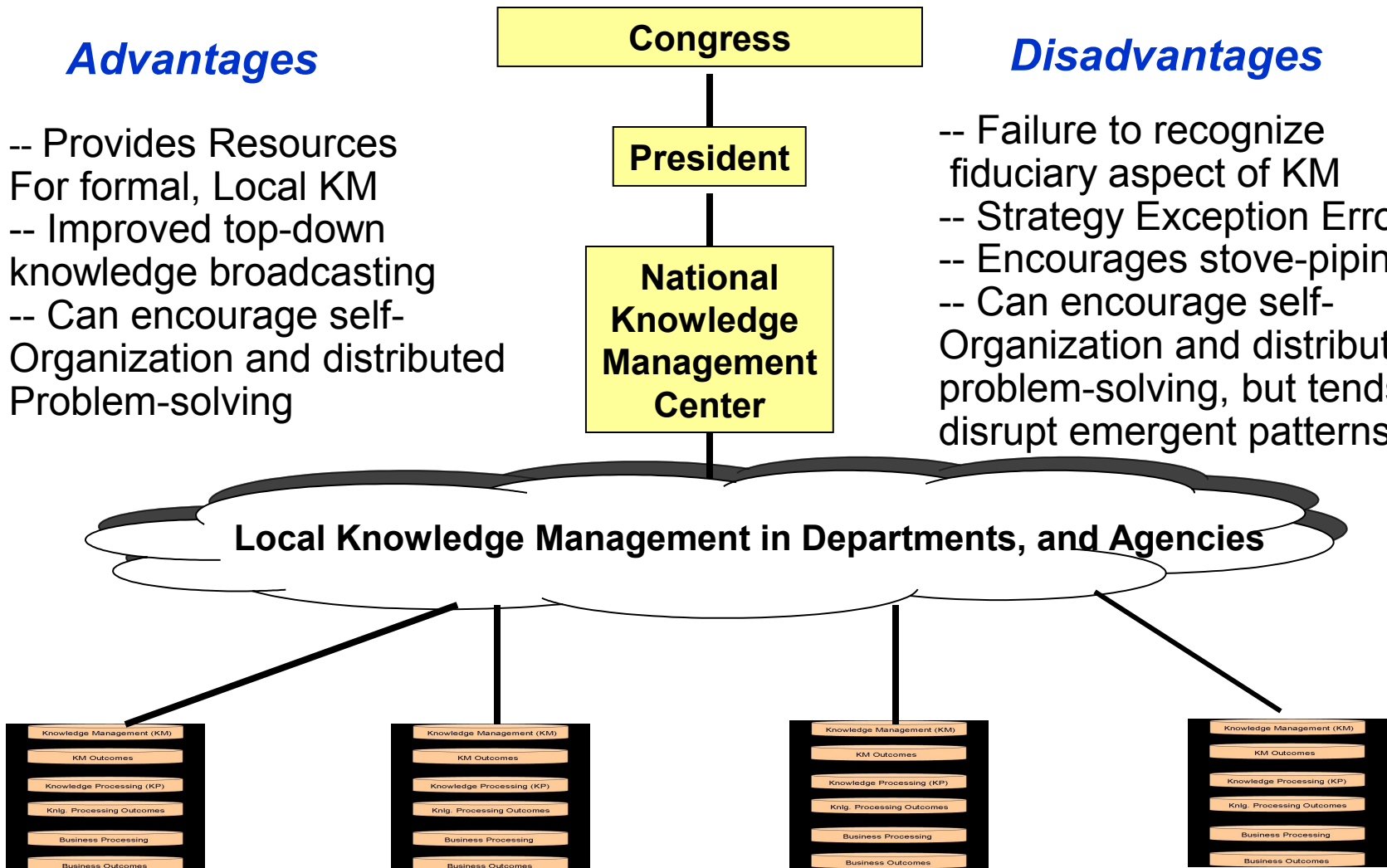
The Executive Model For National Governmental Knowledge Management

Advantages

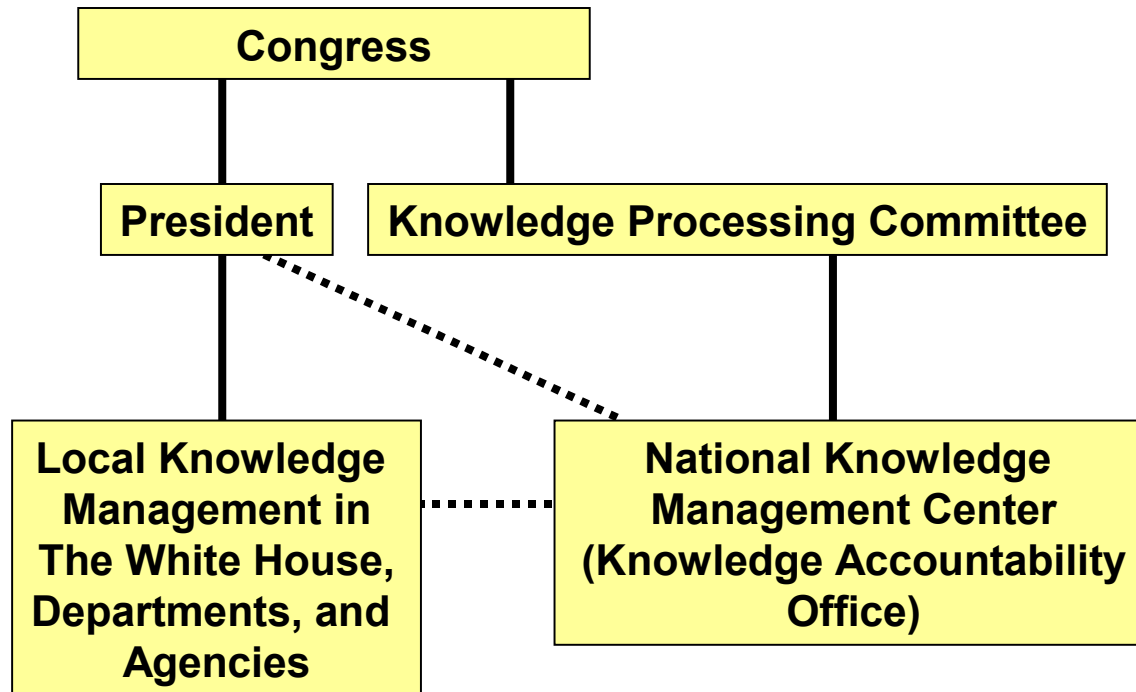
- Provides Resources For formal, Local KM
- Improved top-down knowledge broadcasting
- Can encourage self-Organization and distributed Problem-solving

Disadvantages

- Failure to recognize fiduciary aspect of KM
- Strategy Exception Error
- Encourages stove-piping
- Can encourage self-Organization and distributed problem-solving, but tends to disrupt emergent patterns



The Fiduciary Model For National Governmental Knowledge Management



Decentralized Formal KM + National KM Center

- ▶ 1) Performing KM Research and Development
- ▶ 2) Coordinating information availability about KM and knowledge processing including information about KM R & D performed elsewhere
- ▶ 3) Funding KM programs and projects across the National Government, and also
- ▶ 4) Evaluating the impact of KM and knowledge processing activity across the decentralized, partially self-organizing clusters of KM activity

National KM Center Features

- ▶ Would not have direct line authority over KM staffs and activities in locales, but, would fund programs and projects
- ▶ Nor would it be housed with, or subject to the central executive authority in the National Government
- ▶ That authority would have its own KM activities and staffs, which in both the decentralized possibility and this one, is viewed as one of the “locales” of KM activity
- ▶ Would function autonomously relative to the Executive, and would be directly responsible to the Legislative Authority which would directly fund it and evaluate its performance

More On National KM Center Features

- ▶ In evaluation, it would function like the Government Accountability Office in the United States and would report to the Legislative Fiduciary and also to the Executive, on the state of KM performance and knowledge processing in the National Government
- ▶ In R & D, it would operate like a National Laboratory, but with specialization in creating knowledge about enhancing Knowledge Management and Knowledge Processing

Still More On National KM Center Features

- ▶ In Information Clearinghouse activities, including training, it would serve as coordinator of information and knowledge generated in locales related to KM and knowledge processing
- ▶ In its funding source activities, it would provide support for agencies, groups, and inter-agency teams, performing KM programs and projects enhancing knowledge processing in the various locales including inter-agency problem solving teams

KAO Advantages

- ▶ ***Support self-organization, distributed KM and continued de-centralization in locales***
- ▶ Ameliorate strategy exception error, by making sure that local KM chiefs can get funding for projects strengthening both strategy-making and knowledge processing in various domains, regardless of whether local agency strategies emphasize adaptation and problem solving
- ▶ Ameliorate tendency to locale-based stove-piping, by enabling knowledge and information sharing, and also collaboration across locales and agencies through its knowledge and information sharing programs and facilities, its cross-locale funding, and making available its evaluation reports about KM impact

Final KAO Advantage: Fiduciary Accountability

- ▶ KAO directly accountable to the legislative authority
- ▶ All local KM functions, would continue to be formally accountable to executive authority, but, in addition, would also be accountable to the KAO and ultimately to the legislative authority
- ▶ Because they would be dependent on both for much of the information and knowledge, research findings, funding for programs and projects, and impact and performance evaluations they need in order to function

KAO Disadvantage

- ▶ Over time Congress has weakened its collective authority relative to the Executive
 - Senate protects the power of individual Senators to delay and veto legislation. This makes Congress collectively weak and incapable of playing its role in solving national problems
 - Hasn't defended and enforced its constitutional responsibilities to oversee the Executive Branch. This allows growing secrecy and illegal activity supported by assertions of Executive Privilege
- ▶ KAO proposal runs counter to the trend in American Government toward concentration of power in the Executive Branch of Government
- ▶ Hard to visualize a new agency having direct accountability to Congress. Nevertheless, that's what good National KM needs.

An Unanswered Question

- ▶ Which agencies, and inter-agency projects and programs **can benefit from a formal KM structure**, and which can continue to be handled informally, through individual efforts and self-organizing group structures?
- ▶ Can't be answered now
- ▶ Depends on the KM and knowledge processing performance of agencies and Departments
- ▶ Part of KAO function is to evaluate KM and knowledge processing Government-wide
- ▶ That evaluation will assess performance of both formal and informal KM in the agencies and it will then be possible to evaluate whether a particular agency that lacks a formal KM program may need one.

Questions?

The End – Thanks!

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