

Optimizing Partnership Operational Processes at SEAMOLEC South Tangerang Through Customer Relationship Management

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ABSTRACT

This community service journal documents the operational optimization of partnership management at SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Centre (SEAMOLEC) South Tangerang through the implementation of the Independent Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) Internship program. The Community Partnership Division faced administrative challenges due to decentralized collaboration data, the risk of delays in updating Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), and inconsistencies in monitoring schedules. To address these issues, a cloud-based database system using Google Sheets was designed to integrate all partnership variables in real-time. The implementation method of this community service consisted of five main phases: field survey, problem identification, database design, data implementation, and system evaluation. The program results showed a significant increase in efficiency, where the search time for cooperation documents was cut by up to 90%, and tracking the status of cooperation achieved 100% accuracy. The application of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) principles and continuous quality management successfully strengthened external communication and maintained the loyalty of strategic partners. This program proves that the integration of information technology in partnership administration governance can create a regional collaboration ecosystem that is more productive, responsive, and accountable.

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INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) now plays a highly strategic role in expanding equal access to quality education across the Southeast Asian region (Bandalaria, 2018; Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007; Jung, 2007). The exponential digital transformation demands educational institutions to adopt adaptive, innovative, and responsive learning models

(Dhameria et al., 2025; Mukul & Büyüközkan, 2023). One of the regional organizations at the forefront of developing an information and communication technology-based distance learning ecosystem is the SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Centre (SEAMOLEC). As part of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) network established in 1997, SEAMOLEC is tasked with supporting member countries in strengthening human resource capacity through the integration of modern educational technology (Listyawan et al., 2025).

The effective implementation of distance education requires support from network infrastructure, teacher capacity readiness, and strong cross-sector collaboration (Moore & Fodrey, 2018). Under the leadership of previous directors, SEAMOLEC consistently strengthened its technical foundations and regional partnerships. For example, Dr. Abi Sujak directed the center's focus on implementing ODL systems for secondary schools, while Dr. Gatot Hari Priowirjanto laid an important milestone in strengthening global partnership networks through ICT initiatives like SEA Edunet and interactive web conferencing systems. During the leadership of Dr. R. Alpha Amirrachman, technological acceleration was further enhanced by moving toward the Education 4.0 concept, which integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and the Internet of Things (IoT). This strategic initiative was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which SEAMOLEC successfully facilitated large-scale online training for more than 10,000 educators and launched regional programs such as the Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC).

All these innovations and flagship programs can only run sustainably if supported by professional external partnership governance. This crucial role is carried out by the Community Partnership Division of SEAMOLEC, which acts as the main bridge connecting the institution with hundreds of strategic partners, including universities, schools, local governments, communities, and the industrial sector, both domestically and abroad. This division bears dense operational responsibilities, including identifying new cooperation opportunities, drafting agreements (MoU/MoA), assisting in the implementation of programs in the field, and evaluating partnerships periodically.

Despite having a vital contribution, operational administration processes in the Community Partnership Division still encounter several obstacles that could potentially reduce work efficiency. One of the main constraints is the decentralized digital management of partnership documents. Physical files and partner data are often stored separately on different staff local computer directories. This data fragmentation causes slow information search processes, triggers the risk of overlapping monitoring visit schedules, and creates potential delays in detecting the expiration of MoU manuscripts. This limited data visibility hinders rapid and accurate tactical decision-making by management.

Therefore, partnership administration governance needs to be approached with a modern operational management perspective and the principles of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (Wibowo, 2023). In the context of non-profit organizations and educational institutions, the application of CRM is not aimed at commercializing education, but purely as an instrument to improve service excellence in order to maintain the trust and satisfaction of stakeholders (Khashab et al., 2022). By organizing a strong database of customers or partners, the institution can map interaction profiles in depth, conduct more targeted and customized communication, and minimize the potential loss of cooperation relationships (partner churn) (Reinartz, 2026).

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This community service program based on MBKM independent internship collaboration was carried out offline at the SEAMOLEC office, located in the Universitas Terbuka Complex, Jalan Cabe Raya, Pondok Cabe, Pamulang, South Tangerang, Banten. The primary target of this operational optimization program is the administrative staff in the Community Partnership Division and SEAMOLEC's external relations managers. This activity took place during the internship operational period in 2025.

The implementation of this program adopted a structured operational problem-solving approach divided into five stages. This systematic workflow was designed to identify root causes and generate solutions that can be evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively. The comprehensive details of the implementation workflow are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Workflow and Evaluation of Community Service Implementation

Stage	Description of Operational Activities	Evaluation Parameter / Instrument	Target Output
1. Observation & Onboarding	Introduction to SEAMOLEC's functional structure, division coordination flows, and MoU/MoA drafting procedures.	Work orientation and workflow observation guide.	In-depth understanding of partnership administration procedures.
2. Obstacle Identification	Analysis of physical file accumulation, partner data discrepancies, and overlapping visit schedules	Structured interviews with mentors and pain point mapping	Document containing the inventory of partnership operational problems.
3. System Design	Designing a multi-user digital database structure based on Google Sheets with guaranteed data security.	Assessment of data variable alignment (partner name, MoU date, status).	Prototype of cloud-based partnership database architecture.
4. Migration & Validation	Collecting, cleaning, inputting, and validating active cooperation data.	Cross-verification of the accuracy of physical MoU manuscripts with digital data.	Up-to-date, clean, and 100% validated partnership database.
5. Mentoring & Evaluation	Training staff to operate the database, testing document retrieval speed, and evaluating.	Quantitative retrieval time trials and ease of use questionnaire.	Operational efficiency report and database system handover.

The materials and tools used in this program include laptops, Google Workspace productivity software (Google Sheets, Docs, Drive), historical physical MoU/MoA

documents of SEAMOLEC, and system usability evaluation questionnaires. The method for evaluating success is measured through two main approaches. First, quantitative evaluation is carried out by measuring the difference in time (in minutes) required by staff to find and display the cooperation active period data before and after using the Google Sheets database. Second, qualitative evaluation is carried out to assess changes in work attitudes, improvements in administrative data accuracy, and ease of coordination among staff after the centralized database system is fully implemented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile and Functional Structure of the Organization

SEAMOLEC has a strategic demographic position in the South Tangerang area, Banten, with accessibility directly connected to Universitas Terbuka, the national open education development center. Administratively, the SEAMOLEC headquarters is located at the Universitas Terbuka Complex, Jalan Cabe Raya, Pondok Cabe, Pamulang, South Tangerang, Banten 15418, Indonesia. External communication coordination is supported by official telecommunication channels at phone numbers (62-21) 7422184, 7423725, 7424154, facsimile (62-21) 7422276, and an interactive digital information portal through the website www.seamolec.org.

The official logo (as shown in Figure 1) reflects SEAMOLEC's regional reputation and professionalism in building global partnership networks in Southeast Asia.



Figure 1. SEAMEO SEAMOLEC Logo

The operational smooth-running of the distance education program championed by SEAMOLEC is supported by a structured organizational division of labor under the leadership of the Director. This structure separates the coordination of substantive programs from internal administrative services through two deputy directors. All functional duties are presented in detail in Table 2.

Implementation of the Integrated Partnership Database System

Based on the problem identification stage in the Community Partnership Division, it was found that partnership data recording had previously relied on manual documents and physical archives, which were vulnerable to damage or inaccuracy. Unorganized physical archives, such as piled MoU manuscripts without clear digital indexing, complicated the tracking process. This condition led to slow data retrieval when partner universities or schools requested verification on the status of their distance learning collaboration programs.

Table 2. Organizational Structure and Operational Functions of SEAMOLEC

Leadership Unit	Functional Work Division	Description of Tasks and Operational Responsibilities
Director	Executive Management	Highest leader who formulates strategic policies, makes major decisions, oversees regulatory compliance, and represents the institution in high-level cooperation.
Deputy Director for Program	IT Content & Knowledge Management	Responsible for developing, processing, storing, and distributing digital modules, educational videos, and managing internal repositories and LMS.
	Training	Organizes human resource capacity-building training programs for teachers and lecturers (offline/online/hybrid), compiles training guidelines, and verifies materials
	Research & Development (R&D)	Designs innovative ODL research, formulates research topics based on partner needs, tests educational tools, and publishes research results.
Deputy Director for Administration	Administration & Finance	Manages state/non-state budgets, financial reporting, personnel administration (evaluation, rotation, promotion), procurement of goods, and asset maintenance.
	IT Network	Manages the internal office network infrastructure, data center, video conferencing system, and supports the stability of e-learning platform access.
	Marketing & Publication	Builds institutional image, manages social media, produces visual/audiovisual content, releases press statements, manages the website, and compiles periodic newsletters.
	Community Partnership	Seeks cooperation opportunities, drafts MoU/MoA documents, coordinates program implementation in the field, and evaluates partnerships.

To address these issues, the community service program implemented operational CRM concepts by designing an integrated cloud-based partnership digital database on Google Sheets. The initial step was collecting all of SEAMOLEC's historical physical MoU/MoA documents, cleansing inconsistent data (data cleaning), and entering key parameters into the digital worksheet. The database parameters compiled included the partner institution's full name, correspondence address, email, person-in-charge (PIC) phone number, agreement signing date, expiration date, cooperation status (active or expired), and records of realized collaborative programs.

This cloud-based database system offers significant advantages in real-time data availability and collaborative accessibility. Unlike isolated local computer storage, Google Sheets allows all staff in the Community Partnership Division to update and verify data concurrently without concerns about duplication or document version mismatch. This aligns with database management system theory, which states that centralizing physical data into an integrated digital repository is highly effective in maintaining data accuracy and accelerating repetitive information search processes (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020).

The quantitative impact of implementing this database was highly significant. Before the community service program, the average time required for staff to locate a physical MoU file and verify its expiration date ranged from 10 to 15 minutes, as staff had to search physical cabinets or local computer folders. Once the Google Sheets database was activated, document search time was drastically reduced to under 1 minute (achieving an operational time efficiency of over 90%). Furthermore, the accuracy of partnership histories increased to 100% due to automated validation formulas that highlight partner rows in red when their MoU validity is less than six months.

Monitoring Scheduling Governance and Partner Retention

Another operational issue successfully resolved through this community service program was the irregularity of partnership monitoring visits. Visits to partner locations are vital to nurture relationships, evaluate ongoing ODL programs, and discuss agreement renewal plans before official documents expire. Previously, the lack of a shared monitoring calendar often led to scheduling conflicts among staff or delayed interventions for critical partners.

To overcome this, program implementers developed a structured monitoring visit scheduling guideline integrated directly with the partnership database. A priority scheme was formulated based on the remaining active period of partner MoUs. Partners with less than six months remaining on their agreements were classified as high-priority (red category) and scheduled for contact or visits in the near future. Furthermore, scheduling was synchronized with the division's digital calendar to optimize staff travel routes, thereby saving operational travel costs.

From a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) perspective, this scheduled and targeted interaction represents a practical execution of customer retention strategies (Fadila et al., 2026). Retaining the satisfaction of existing partners is far more efficient and strategically impactful for regional distance learning programs than continuously seeking new partners while neglecting existing collaborations (Rese, 2003). Consistently communicated and timely monitoring ensures that partner trust in SEAMOLEC's institutional professionalism is sustainably maintained.

Application of Academic Theory in Industrial Practice

This MBKM Independent Internship program proved to have a comprehensive impact, not only in improving SEAMOLEC's internal administrative system but also in enriching the academic capacity of interning students.

The curriculum integration proves that the MBKM program successfully reduces the gap between academic theory in classrooms and operational reality in the industry (Usman & Hartati, 2024). Students do not merely perform basic administrative tasks like archiving but also contribute fresh academic perspectives to refine organizational workflows (Bertolini et al., 2024).



Figure 2. Opening Ceremony for the Internship Orientation at SEAMEO SEAMOLEC

Operational Obstacles and Technological Mitigation

Although database digitalization via Google Sheets delivered substantial efficiency, its field implementation was not without operational challenges. The largest non-technical obstacle was the incompleteness of historical partnership records. Many physical MoUs from previous years lacked active PIC contact details. Consequently, the program implementers had to dedicate extra time to trace digital sent-and-received mail archives and re-contact partner schools or universities for data validation.

From a technical perspective, Google Sheets has long-term functional limitations. Since Google Sheets is not a pure relational database system, it cannot automatically dispatch email alerts for MoU renewals without custom scripting (Google Apps Script). Moreover, data accuracy remains highly dependent on staff discipline in manual updates (human dependency), leaving room for input errors when workload volume is high.

To mitigate these challenges, program implementers and industry mentors devised tactical adjustments. First, a simple Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was drafted, requiring staff to update the database within 24 hours of executing a new MoU. Second, personal mentoring sessions were conducted to ensure uniform operational capabilities among division staff. For long-term scalability, it is recommended that SEAMOLEC transition to an Educational Management Information System (EMIS / SIMDIK) integrated with automatic relational CRM modules to eliminate manual input reliance and minimize system errors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

The community service program integrated with the Independent MBKM Internship at SEAMOLEC South Tangerang's Community Partnership Division has proven that optimizing operational workflows through cloud-based digital databases significantly improves administrative efficiency. Transitioning from fragmented physical archives to a centralized Google Sheets repository drastically reduced document retrieval times by

over 90%, while achieving 100% historical data accuracy. The automated tracking system based on MoU active periods successfully minimized agreement expiration risks and resolved monitoring visit scheduling conflicts. This practical experience also serves as a strong testament to the alignment of management science theory in addressing regional institutional operational challenges.

To ensure the sustainability of the newly established system, it is recommended that the Community Partnership Division of SEAMOLEC strictly enforce the drafted database maintenance SOP. Periodic IT-related refresher training sessions should be conducted for administrative staff to minimize data input errors. For strategic long-term development, SEAMOLEC is advised to upgrade its information system infrastructure by adopting a dedicated relational CRM platform linked directly with official electronic correspondence systems. This automated system is expected to send proactive notifications to external partners before cooperation agreements officially expire, thereby maintaining service excellence and regional partnership loyalty across Southeast Asia.

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