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COMMUNITIES FIRST

CoP Reflection and Future Plan (Team)

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ABOUT COMMUNITIES FIRST

Communities First is a Community of Practice (CoP) founded by PCOM650 team members: Lorraine Fentie, Travis Paterson, Carrie Voysey, and Dominika Zapolnik. Communities First exists as a knowledge hive to promote and share best practices related to the creation of inclusive community spaces, for professional collaboration, networking and professional growth opportunities, and to create, through community spaces, a sense of community and civic mindedness. This is not meant to be strictly knowledge-sharing, but rather a group committed to the implementation of best-practices and collaboration for the purposes of creating community spaces that build and strengthen a sense of community and belonging across Canada.



FINDING OUR RHYTHM

How do CoPs grow? They have lifecycles and life spans--they emerge, flourish, mature and may reproduce by forming new seeds which will begin the next lifecycle. For each lifecycle phase, specific design, facilitation, and support strategies exist that help communities find their rhythm and achieve their goals.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) denote that communities of practices are composed of three elements: “a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues, a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain” (p. 27). Within these elements, there are five stages of community of practice development: potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship, transformation (2002, p. 68).

1

Potential

The first stage of CoP development which holds the potential of developing into something more.

2

Coalescing

As members build more connections a community is formed and grows in membership and breadth of knowledge.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. 68.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

After moving through the potential stage, Communities First continues to journey through the coalescing stage of its CoP. Within its domain, probable member roles have been defined, along with an understanding of the value of sharing knowledge. Potential members are being identified to join the community and benefit from networking and sharing information.

Relationships and trust are being developed and common knowledge needs are not only being determined, but are also being discovered and shared as a form of practice. Extant networks (including other, relevant, CoPs), are being accessed and assessed and possibilities are being imagined and discussed.

GETTING HERE

Cultivating community through a culture of inquiry and creating a sense of place.

To identify the potential of Communities First's CoP, the components for a *sense of place* and a *culture of inquiry* have been generated for members. A *sense of place* has been created in the minds of community members through an integrated, thoughtful combination of video conferencing, online events including lectures, email, texts, group chats, blogging, vlogging, podcasts, and engagement through the Communities First website.

Discussions of weekly meetings have been captured through minutes and recordings of conversations. In addition to this, a *culture of inquiry*, which celebrates diverse points of view, encourages debate with civil discourse, fosters a thirst for deeper understanding, and inspires quests for personalized and collective learning and social participation, is promoted in Communities First's CoP. These methods of communication have been effective thus far and will continue to be used and built upon over time.



communitiesfirst.ca is an evolving and organic website which will continue to grow as membership increases. Social media pages will also continue to be added as an easy way for members to connect and share ideas.

NEXT STEPS

Communities First's next step is to continue nurturing the CoP and building our membership with the hopes of entering the maturing stage. Although we recognize this as an organic process, members are committed to taking actionable steps to facilitate this process. Within this stage, the CoP's role in relation to other domains will be strengthened and defined. The community will assess and redefine its boundaries (if necessary) and, in practice, the community's knowledge will become more organized. As Wenger, McDermott and Snyder suggest: "... as members build connections, they coalesce into a community. Once formed, the community often grows in the membership and the depth of knowledge members share. When mature, communities go through cycles of high and low activity, just like other living things. During this stage communities often take stewardship of the knowledge and practice they share and consciously develop them" (Wenger, E., McDermott, R., Snyder W., 2002, p. 68).

To get to this stage, Communities First will take on the task of coaching the CoP. It will focus on internal interest in cutting-edge topics and expand membership to new members by:

- *Refining and/or redefining the community boundaries*
- *Standardize entry requirements and processes*
- *Promoting the CoP*
- *Building and organizing a knowledge repository (aka "knowledge hive")*



BECOMING MATURE – REFINING, REDEFINING AND STANDARDIZING

We need to explore best practices in order to standardize processes and to continue to evolve as a CoP.



Communities First will gather feedback and input from its CoP members to refine and/or redefine community boundaries.

This will include: identification of and potential networking with other domains and relevant CoPs, role clarification, identification of training/coaching opportunities, and an assessment and review of the Community Charter.

These discussions will result in an updated Community Charter along with standardized entry requirements and processes for the CoP.

MATURATION TOOLS

What we can do to continue to grow.

1

Determine your Community -What is the scope and target of this intervention?

2

Determine your Objective(s) (Wicked Problem) - What is the issue, and what are the current hegemonic force/barriers to change? Where in the system should you focus your attention toward?

3

Determine your Stakeholders - Who is at the table? Who is not? There are no experts; we are all beneficiaries.

4

Determine Dissemination Method - What is the most effective, sensitive and relevant method of communication? What is the role of the public sphere in achieving this and mobilizing support?

Communities First will use various tools, such as Answer Garden, along with some of the discussion points and questions (left), as provided by Olaolu Adeleye (Olaolu Adeleye, personal communication, Feb. 13, 2019), to guide and encourage conversations and create an environment in which the Communities First can be a successful and meaningful CoP.

ORGANIZING THE KNOWLEDGE HIVE

As a result of this CoP, a knowledge repository or knowledge hive on community spaces is being built. The organization of this knowledge is important when searching for information on specific areas of interest, generating new topics, and identifying knowledge gaps and trends. As such, additional research will be undertaken to not only enhance the project areas currently suggested and not yet discussed, but also to pull out and highlight thematic threads of interest.

For example, there are currently numerous contributions within the CoP on best practices of community spaces. To enhance this specific area of interest, members of the CoP could connect with leaders in this field to obtain more information. We also have information available on community spaces and sport. One of our members has expressed a desire to shift “sport” to “active lifestyle” because it encompasses more. This could be considered a new topic or as a knowledge gap or trend.

AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION



- How do we build community spaces that are inclusive and accessible?
- Who are the leaders in this field that we could connect with to learn more and collaborate?
- Do we have the “right” members—are there diverse perspectives available to the CoP?
- What types of funding options are available for the specific area of interest?
- What are some of the perceptions/stigma we need to be aware of in this field and how can we combat them?
- Has reconciliation been considered?

TIMELINE



Over the next two weeks, Communities First will continue to nurture the CoP by building connections between core group members and other potential members, finding ideas that generate excitement, insights, practices worth sharing, documenting conversations, and identifying opportunities to provide value.

We will also take the next steps of refining, defining and standardizing entry requirements and community boundaries and by building and organizing its knowledge hive.

REFERENCES

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