



COMMUNITIES FIRST

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Assignment 1: Community of Practice Charter
and Plan

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Community Charter

Communities First is a community of practice (CoP) founded by PCOM650 team members: Lorraine Fentie, Travis Paterson, Carrie Voysey, and Dominika Zapolnik, that focuses on collaborative approaches to the research and development of community spaces. This *Communities First* charter outlines the information and processes required for a CoP to successfully form, grow, and sustain itself in the community spaces sphere. The community charter includes the theoretical and practical requirements of CoP's and includes intended audiences and collaborators in this endeavor.

“Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, 2002, p. 4). The social theory of learning is the main application by which individuals learn and absorb information within a CoP. According to Wenger (1998), the primary emphasis of this theory is on learning as social participation--that is, learning that takes place through participation in the practices of social communities and in the construction of his or her identity through these communities.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) denote that communities of practice 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).



1.2 Domain

The domain for this CoP refers to the physical, community spaces that will be created across Canada for community development purposes. Community spaces, as we envision them, are physical spaces that are open and accessible to all community members. They invite community members to connect, share, and learn from one another and are an integral part of a healthy and vibrant community. These spaces allow community members to interact with one another in ways that foster inclusivity, reconciliation, intergenerational learning, and meaningful connections.

“Whatever creates the common ground, the domain of a community is its raison d’être. It is what bring people together and guides their learning. It defines the identity of the community, its place in the world, and the value of its achievements to members and to others” (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, p. 31).

Communities First exists 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.

1.3 Community

1.3.1 Community: Individuals sharing views and perspectives

“The community creates the social fabric of learning. A strong community fosters interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust. It encourages a willingness to share ideas, expose one's ignorance, ask difficult questions, and listen carefully ... Community is an important element because learning is a matter of belonging as well as an intellectual process, involving the heart as well as the head (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, p. 28-29).

Individual members of this CoP will contribute up to three articles, news/media stories, or organizational/political documents of interest and relevance, on the website during the second unit of this course (January 21-February 3).

1.3.2 What roles are people going to play?

Individual roles within this CoP will emerge as members trust and comfort level with one another increases. Roles will not be dictated, rather, they will emerge organically.

1.3.3 How often will the community meet, and how will members connect on an ongoing basis?

For the purposes of the PCOM650 course, meetings will initially take place weekly on Thursdays for its duration and will be re-visited upon completion of the course.

1.3.4 What kinds of activities will generate energy and develop trust?

Sharing experiences, reporting back, reporting on progress, building relationships and meeting informally outside of “regular” meetings will generate energy and develop trust. Sharing information via social media and through a team chat will also be of benefit.

1.3.5 How can the community balance the needs of various segments of members?

Members of the CoP will be given an opportunity to take on roles and responsibilities of interest to them. This will allow for additional professional development and growth of the CoP as well as its individual members. Support of and exploration of ideas that fit within the scope of the CoP, along with sharing expertise and experience as members, are also seen as valuable ways to grow the knowledge base of CoP.

1.3.6 How will members deal with conflict?

Members will deal with conflict by:

- Speaking one-on-one if personal issue arises between two people
- Speaking as a team about issues if involves all
- Inviting a moderator (within/without group) at earliest convenience

- Bringing anything to a founding members vote that requires decision

1.3.7 How will newcomers be introduced into the community?

Newcomers will be invited and introduced to the group through an announcement via social media and through the invitation of CoP members through its networks. An information announcement will be modelled after the CDC template found at the following link, under Formation Announcement Template:

https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/resourcekit/resources.html#could_it_be_a_cop

They will also be invited to review the publicly available resources and video on the *Communities First* website. A welcome letter will be sent to new members and they will be added to the member section of the website.

“The art of community development is to use the synergy between domain, community, and practice to help community evolve and fulfill its potential” (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, p. 47).

1.4 Practice

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder outline six questions that will help *Communities First* become a resource of knowledge for its members and others outside of the CoP (2002, p. 46).

These questions include consideration of:

1.4.1 What knowledge to share, develop, document?

The *Communities First* CoP will develop a repository of best practices related to the development of community spaces. For the purposes of the PCOM650 course, these meetings will initially take place weekly on Thursdays for its duration and will be re-visited upon completion of the course. Meeting minutes will be taken and shared on the *Communities First*, member-only website portal. Resources that are discovered will be shared on the envisioned *Communities First* website, for both member and non-member access.

1.4.2 What kinds of learning activities to organize?

This CoP enables members to meet weekly via Collaborate through the Royal Roads University Moodle student platform. This allows members the opportunity to connect, share and discuss their learnings and allows its membership to request assistance of other members. Should members wish to communicate between meetings, emails of CoP members have been distributed for that purpose and will also be available in the member section of the website.

This CoP will last the duration of the PCOM650 course, after which members will decide if it is a valuable tool for their professional and academic purposes, and will either continue working together or not.

Group assignments related to this CoP will be worked on collaboratively via Google Docs and upon completion shared on the *Communities First* website.

CoP members will share articles of best practices related to the creation of community spaces and reach out to partner organizations and other CoP's that may help with the evolution of the CoP.

1.4.3 How should the knowledge repository be organized to reflect the practice of members and be easily accessible?

A knowledge repository will be created as a tab on the *Communities First* website for members and non-members to view. A members-only section will allow for internal documents (such as this CoP charter and plan) to be shared among members.

1.4.4 When should processes be standardized and when are differences appropriate?

Processes will be researched and decided on by members of the CoP. As the CoP grows and evolves, processes and standardizations will be decided on by members through a spirit of collaboration.

1.4.5 What development project should the community undertake?

This CoP will undertake the development of a website in order to build a repository of knowledge of best practices (theoretical and practical examples) for the creation of community spaces.

The eventual goal is the actual creation of physical community spaces in each member's respective geographic locations: Victoria, Vancouver, Swift Current, and Simcoe County.

1.4.6 Where are sources of knowledge and benchmarks outside of the community of practice?

Member's professional networks, academic sources related to the development of community spaces, community leaders (including Indigenous elders), not-for-profit organizations, and local and provincial governments, are sources of knowledge and benchmarks outside of the community of practice.

“These are the kinds of questions that will help a community intentionally become an effective knowledge resource to its members and to other constituents that may benefit from its expertise” (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, p. 46).

2 Justification

2.1 Community Spaces Need

Community spaces serve different functions and can easily be seen in spatial terms. They can be found on a floor of a particular building, a park, a square, roads, sidewalks, etc. Yet with the effort of communities, they can be turned into lively, creative spaces that bring people together. The creation of community spaces is important: they benefit our health, help build a sense of community, civic identity and culture, can transform wasted space, and can give a city or an organization “character” while enhancing cultural and architectural diversity.

Community spaces have the potential to provide an inviting atmosphere where people can decompress from their stressful daily routines by relaxing, connecting, or being physically active. Citizens who initiate and participate in community building activities and events create community by capitalizing on a local community's or organization's assets, inspiration, and potential to improve the quality of people's health, happiness, and well-being. In urban

environments, where concrete is the main building material of choice, a dash of colour, a community attraction or public art installation can make a huge difference. Installations, such as plant life or art pieces, can not only compliment the city's or organization's landscape, but they encourage people to interact with the artifacts and become a subject of conversation. When you create an inviting space, people will come.

3 Scope

3.1 Vision

Communities First supports community development through community spaces, with a focus on fostering active lifestyles while recognizing reconciliation practices.

3.2 Mission

Communities First is a CoP for individuals and organizations to come together in their commitment to share skills and knowledge in order to create inclusive community spaces.

4 Goals

The goals of the *Communities First* CoP are as follows:

- Work toward solutions for the creation of inclusive community spaces
- Evaluate the success of the CoP on a regular basis
- Look for collaboration opportunities with partners outside of the CoP
- Develop and support community spaces best practices on the CoP website

4.1 Guiding Values/Principles

The following points represent the values of the *Communities First* CoP:

- Learning
- Sharing Information
- Stewardship
- Innovation
- Collaboration

4.2 High-Level Requirements

The following points represent the high-level requirements of the CoP in order to meet its objectives:

- Develop a charter and plan for the CoP and receive community support
- Launch CoP; invite participation
- Educate stakeholders and share best practices/importance of initiatives
- Encourage participation and collaboration
- Evaluate community effectiveness

4.3 Major Deliverables

The following points represent the major deliverables of the CoP:

- Kickoff message
- Community of Practice charter
- Communication plan

- Online collaboration tools: website, calendar of events, discussion groups (social media, collaborate), multimedia (video, podcast), email
- Partnership/membership meetings
- Resources shared via website
- Regular evaluations of CoP effectiveness

5 Community Participation

5.1 Individual and organizational benefits

The Community of Practice enables individuals to:

- Share skills and knowledge
- Increase involvement with community information
- Identify needs and access opportunities
- Build relationships and networks
- Develop a sense of belonging to community
- Leadership

The Community of Practice benefits communities by:

- Serving the members of the community better
- Encouraging innovation
- Building relationships
- Creating an understanding of the community
- Learning from past success and failure stories

5.2 Ground Rules for Being a Member

“Knowing the boundaries and the leading edge of the domain enables members to decide exactly what is worth sharing, how to present their ideas, and which activities to pursue” (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder, p. 27-28).

Wenger (2008) outlines many rules for being a member of a CoP. *Communities First* will focus on the following five points which act as guidelines for our membership.

- Members have a level of competency and knowledge with the objective well enough to be able to contribute to it;
- Members will interact, share information, experiences, raise concerns and share experiences;
- Members are bound together by their collectively-developed understanding of what their community is about and they hold each other accountable to this sense of joint enterprise;
- Members respect one another and work together to problem solve whenever possible; and
- Members are accountable enough to take some responsibility for the CoP and contribute to its pursuit.

6 Assumptions, Constraints, and Limitations

6.1 Assumptions

The following assumptions were taken into consideration in the development of this community. If any of these assumptions prove to be invalid, the community could face a possible risk.

- There is an interest among community space stakeholders in forming informal and formal connections.
- There will be CoP members who take increased responsibility for stewarding the success of the community.
- “We learn through informal communities of practice in our workplaces” (Walinga & Wilson-Mah, 1991, p. 25).
- “Our opportunities to connect 1) working, 2) learning, and 3) innovating, rest in our understanding of actual practices in all three areas and in the redesign of our organizations” (Walinga & Wilson-Mah, as cited in Brown and Duguid, 1991, p. 25).

6.2 Constraints and Limitations

The following constraints were taken into consideration in the development of this community:

- The availability of members to participate collectively at a single unique time may limit the number of participants.
- There may be technological constraints for those living in rural areas.
- Policies, liabilities, and procedures are required to ensure compliance with local bylaws and organizational policies.
- Community leaders may not emerge within the CoP.
- Lack of community participation and interest in the projects may be a factor.

7 Community Organization

7.1 Leadership, Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

This section describes the key roles supporting the CoP, as described by Nickols (2003, p. 4).

Champion – The Champion provides enthusiasm and energy for organizing meetings and communications. The Champion is the chief organizer of events, and the administrator of communications.

Members – Members interact with each other, sharing information, insights and experiences, participating in discussions and raising issues and concerns regarding common needs and requirements. Their primary responsibility is to participate actively, to learn and to share their learning.

Facilitator – The Facilitator is responsible for clarifying communications, drawing out the reticent, ensuring that dissenting points of view are heard and understood, posing questions to further discussion and keeping discussions on topic—all subject to the will of the group. This can be accomplished during face-to-face sessions or in virtual meetings.

Practice Leader – The Practice Leader is the acknowledged leader of the CoP. His or her leadership is based on competence, not rank or position. Leadership in a CoP can shift as the issues and concerns of the CoP shift. Practice Leaders always emerge; they cannot be appointed.

Sponsor – The Sponsor communicates the company's support for a sponsored community. The Sponsor may help remove barriers that obstruct community progress (e.g., time, funding and other resources). The Sponsor will also be instrumental in establishing the mission and expected outcomes for the community.

7.2 Stakeholders

This section outlines individuals with an interest in the CoP.

- Members of the Community of Practice
- Indigenous Elders
- Government organizations
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Businesses and Chambers of Commerce
- Academic institutions and academics
- Media
- Other community organizations

8 Community Charter Approval

The undersigned acknowledge they have reviewed the community charter and agree to launch the Communities First Community of Practice.

Signature:		Date: January 23, 2019	
Print Name: Dominika Zapolnik			

Signature:		Date: January 23, 2019	
Print Name: Carrie Voysey			

Signature:		Date: January 23, 2019	
Print Name: Travis Paterson			

Signature:		Date: January 23, 2019	
Print Name: Lorraine Fentie			

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