

# Propelling Professional Learning Statewide

Use this handout to answer questions adapted from the Office of Technologies document linked below. The questions will support the creation of communities of practice.

## Communities of Practice

---

Communities of practice are an important component of educator growth to impact student learning. The United States Department of Education, Office of Technology released [Exploratory Research on Designing Online Communities of Practice for Educators to Create Value](#) with details on exploratory research about designing and managing these groups. (From the Preparing for Presentations class in the ICoach Learning Pathway.)

## Community Focus

---

1. What is the community's purpose?
  - a. What problem is it trying to solve?
  - b. What opportunity is it intended to take advantage of?
  - c. Why is it significant?
2. Who is the core audience?
  - a. Which educators will need to become active participants for it to achieve its purpose?
  - b. Will the focus be on a group of homogeneous educators or will there be diverse members?
  - c. Will the scope be local, regional, or state wide?
3. How will users participate?
  - a. What kinds of activities do you envision?
  - b. Where, when and by what means will members connect with each other?
4. What value does your community add to educators' practices? (These questions can be answered by considering the INFOhio professional learning collection of eBooks.)
  - a. What will motivate educators to participate actively in the community?
  - b. What areas of their practices will it address and how?

## Leadership and Stakeholders

---

1. Who are the community's leaders?
  - a. Will staff of the sponsoring organization lead the community or will members of the community itself serve as leaders?
2. What are their roles?
  - a. What roles will different leaders play, and what competencies are needed for each?
3. Who are the key stakeholders?
  - a. Who are the sponsors of the community? Whom might the activities of the community affect, directly or indirectly, and how?
4. Who will help inform decisions about the community?
  - a. How will the needs of all stakeholders be determined and addressed?
5. How will decisions be made about the community?
  - a. What role will sponsors have in directing the work of leaders and providing them with the support they need?
  - b. What say will community members have in determining the community's priorities and activities?

## Role of Resources

---

1. What role will resources play in your community?
  - a. Are they a means for members to learn from each other or is access to or the production of resources an end to itself?
2. How will resources align with your community's focus?
  - a. What kind of resources align with the community's objectives and values?
  - b. Which are likely to be useful to the community's intended audience?
  - c. What genres and media are likely to be most accessible?
3. Who is responsible for contributing resources?
  - a. Will resources be developed by the sponsoring organization, outside experts.

## Public Versus Private

---

1. What types of privacy issues might be encountered?
  - a. How sensitive are the experiences and artifacts that members will need to advance the community's purpose?
  - b. How comfortable is your intended audience about sharing practices in public?
2. What is the appropriate balance between making practices public and fostering trust?
  - a. How much of the knowledge shared in the community needs to be public to further the goals?
  - b. What level of privacy do members need to feel comfortable sharing authentically?
  - c. How can private activities be structured to build confidence in public sharing?

## Adapting Technology

---

1. How can technology be leveraged to support your vision?
  - a. What needs for communication, resource exchange, collaboration, and relationship building can technology help?

## Member Recruitment

---

1. How do we advertise our community?
  - a. What channels are available and most likely to encourage participation?
  - b. What existing relationships with potential members can you leverage?
2. How do you effectively communicate the community's purpose to the intended audience?
  - a. What are the clearest and most concise ways to help potential members understand the benefits of the community?
3. How big should the community be?
  - a. How many members can the leadership effectively support?

## **Sustaining Engagement**

---

1. How do you encourage members to participate?
  - a. What kinds of communication will you continue beyond the initial recruitment?
  - b. What are incentives for participation?
2. How do you sustain engagement?
  - a. How can activities encourage regular and substantial contributions from members?
3. How do you support members in achieving the community's goals?
  - a. What tools and services do you need to provide to members?
  - b. How will you work to clarify and modify the community's purpose over time?
4. How do you engage users with varying amounts of time to commit?
  - a. What are reasonable expectations about how often and how long members will be able to participate?
  - b. How do you ensure high-value-to-time ratio for that participation?

## **Formative Evaluation**

---

1. How do you define success?
  - a. What does it look like when the community serves its purpose?
  - b. How quickly can it reach its goals?
2. How will you measure success?
  - a. How does success translate into specific metrics that can be tracked?
  - b. What methods are feasible and appropriate?
  - c. What kinds of data are likely to yield actionable information about the community?
3. How will you report the data to stakeholders?
  - a. Which formats for presenting data are appropriate to which groups?
  - b. How do time and skill determine how you will share the data?