**Exercise:**

**Developing a Community of Practice**

**Overview**

The purpose of this exercise is to provide participants with an understanding of how to develop a community of practice (CoP). A CoP is a group of individuals who are bound together by a shared interest or purpose and interact over time. CoPs have the capacity to both *share* and *generate* knowledge. Several elements should be discussed as part of the creation of a CoP, including setting a purpose, identification of a timeline, and defining the audience, strategy, security, and culture.

**Objectives**

1. To identify the types of project activities that could benefit from the establishment and use of a CoP.
2. To critically discuss elements that should be included in a CoP charter and details for addressing these elements.

**Time**

Total: 50 minutes

The Activity Leader should explain the exercise (5 minutes), allow time for the participants to think of an existing activity to base this exercise on (5 minutes), and then give participants time to write down their thoughts for developing a hypothetical CoP based on six elements (15 minutes). After that, participants should share their thoughts in small groups (20 minutes), then allow a few participants to share their overall reactions with the entire group (5 minutes).

**Implementing the Activity**

Ask participants to think about a few activities they are implementing that could be enhanced with the addition of a CoP.

Ask them to choose one activity to focus on for this exercise. Direct them to the **Exercise Worksheet** included at the end of this document to write down their answers. Then list the six elements below and ask the participants to draft responses to the corresponding questions in the worksheet.

1. Goal
2. Timeline
3. Audience
4. Strategies
5. Security
6. Culture

After participants have completed the worksheet to the best of their ability, ask them to discuss the following questions in small groups:

* What challenges would you expect when integrating a CoP into an existing activity?
* Based on the elements and details you have developed, does it seem like your organization or project is well positioned to develop a CoP?
  + Why or why not?
* What challenges would you expect if you were developing a CoP for a *future activity*?
  + How would these challenges be unique from integrating a CoP into an existing activity?

Ask a few participants to share out their reactions to the discussion to the entire group. Prompt them with these questions:

* What did you hear from someone else that might be useful to your program?
* What did you not find useful or relevant to your program?
* What did you find surprising?

**Exercise Worksheet**

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **GOAL** | |
| What are you hoping to achieve in your community? |  |
| What are your long-term goals for the community? |  |
| **TIMELINE** | |
| When would you like to get started? |  |
| How will you decide when conversations take place? |  |
| **AUDIENCE** | |
| Who is your audience? |  |
| Do you have access to them? |  |
| What medium do they like to use to exchange information? |  |
| **STRATEGIES** | |
| What strategies will you employ to capture your target audience? |  |
| What strategies will you employ to achieve your goals? |  |
| **SECURITY** | |
| Will sensitive information be shared? |  |
| What level of security is necessary for your CoP? |  |
| How will you explain the security and privacy with your members? |  |
| **CULTURE** | |
| How will the conversations in the community start? |  |
| Will the conversations be moderated by the community leader? |  |
| What style would fit your community's purpose? |  |