COMMUNITIES @ USAID
TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

Contents

Foreword

Communities of practice (CoPs) provide people with a desire to address, discuss, and share their knowledge on a particular topic or issue with the means to do so. The USAID Knowledge for Development Strategy identifies such communities as vital to allowing USAID to reach its full knowledge-sharing capacity and improve its business process.

We recognize that creating and maintaining a community requires dedication and direction. USAID's *Communities@USAID Technical Guidance* was developed to assist in this process. Designed to be an easy "how to" manual for those launching and sustaining a community, the guidance steps you through the process from beginning to end.

The Knowledge for Development team trusts that you will find this technical guidance useful, whether your community is newly formed, needs ongoing support, or is winding down and moving into a different phase of knowledge and information exchange. We welcome your comments about this technical guidance. In addition, by sharing your lessons and experiences, we can continue to improve the support and technical guidance offered to USAID's communities.

Please feel free to provide feedback, suggestions, and lessons from your experience to KfD@USAID.gov.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview: Communities@USAID

KNOWLEDGE FOR DEVELOPMENT (KfD) MANDATE

For any organization, knowledge is a critical asset in attaining success and high performance. It provides a competitive edge through best practices, innovation, experience, and lessons from the past. However, knowledge can be invisible or inaccessible to those who need it, and it can easily be lost when people transfer posts or retire.

Knowledge therefore needs to be managed so that it yields the best value to the organization seeking to use it. USAID created the Knowledge for Development (KfD) program to **connect people with what they need to know** so they can **work smarter in concert with others** to accomplish USAID's mission. KfD helps people adapt to rapidly changing situations, policies, and strategies by making information and experience easy to find and use for informed decisions and actions.

As Etienne Wenger says, "The knowledge of an organization lives in a constellation of communities of practice, each taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organization needs." The Communities@USAID program offers a way for the Agency to bring people together around common interests, passions, or objectives. USAID communities of practice, or CoPs (hereafter called simply "communities"), can provide a trusted and organizationally sound method for sharing and accessing knowledge, to benefit the Agency and strengthen its effectiveness in the international development arena.

WHY COMMUNITIES ARE IMPORTANT

As a natural part of organizational life, communities are an effective means of creating and sharing knowledge. They develop and grow organically. USAID communities have emerged as places to foster collaboration and dialogue among people invested in common goals, issues, or business practices. The strength and resilience of communities lies in the multiplier

effects they trigger by bringing their members together to apply their collective skills and knowledge to support USAID's mission.

WHAT COMMUNITIES DO

Communities@USAID offers a systematic way for the Agency's communities to capture and share individual and collective experience that will contribute to the organization's success. Communities can

*   Provide timely, accurate, accessible information to their members and the organization at large

*   Apply lessons and replicate successes to achieve results more efficiently

*   Retain and share institutional memory

*   Support a culture of knowledge sharing through improved collaboration

*   Facilitate professional development and mentoring

WHAT A COMMUNITY IS

"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 understanding and knowledge of this area by interacting on an ongoing basis."

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*

"Communities of practice are groups of people who come together to share and learn from one another, face-to-face and virtually. They are held together by a common interest in a body of knowledge and are driven by a desire and need to share problems, experiences, insights, templates, tools, and best practices. Community members deepen their knowledge by interacting on an on-going basis and, over time, develop a set of shared practices."

American Productivity and Quality Council, 2001, *Building Communities of Practice: Continuing Success in Knowledge Management*

Informal, voluntary networks of colleagues operating within the bounds of organizational structures—public or private—can function effectively in achieving their organization's goals and objectives. It is within these voluntary groups that new employees are mentored, their expertise and knowledge is shared and nurtured, experts are identified, and answers are rapidly provided to an array of inquiries. Knowledge-intensive agencies learn to capitalize on their "know how," "know who," and "know what" resources to better operate, compete, and provide solutions in an increasingly global environment. At USAID, this knowledge has become more available, not only through better use of databases and information systems, but through access to the knowledge assets of our various communities.

Thus, outside of the formal bureaucracies and aligned with participants' own mandates, USAID communities are becoming increasingly recognized as successful mechanisms for managing and sharing our organizational knowledge. USAID provides electronic tools and support structures to assist each community in launching, expanding, and sustaining itself. USAID's KfD program and Web Services team are offering Agency communities use of the Communities@USAID website on the USAID Alliance Network (http://ecco.usaidallnet.gov). This online space offers your community a place for collaboration, discussion forums, and customizable knowledge management content, and it allows access to the Agency's "extended enterprise"—the full spectrum of USAID's stakeholders, partners, clients, and suppliers, plus USAID itself.

Through facilitated discussions, support to community leaders and facilitators, knowledge sharing within communities, and conversations across and among leaders via the C4C (USAID's "community for communities"), communities can continue to experiment, grow, and show valuable results. Besides offering tools and tactics to build and improve community processes, the Communities@USAID program includes people-to-people and people-to-process support. In collaboration with training designers and staff from USAID's Office of Human Resources, the KfD team is offering short knowledge-management courses, including classes in facilitation and collaboration. Also, USAID's Web Services team

is partnering with KfD to provide training and help-desk support for communities that are using the online space for their virtual collaboration work.

CHAPTER 2

Planning Your Community

Like a living organism, a community is born, grows, matures, and dies. The full life cycle includes five key stages: planning, start-up, growth, maturity, and closure. Each stage is characterized by its own opportunities and challenges. (For more details, see Appendix A: Life Cycle of a Community.)

When beginning your community, it is important to lay the foundation with care. At a minimum, the community-planning stage includes establishing these key elements:

- The "why." This entails exploring your community's **business case**—that is, identifying a need for your community, its importance, and its fit with the organizational mission, strategy, and programs. (For assistance in developing a business case for your community, see Appendix B: Communities @ USAID Questionnaire.) It is also important to develop a **community charter** that defines your community's scope and purpose and articulates its reason for being, its focus, and the knowledge you plan to share. In preparing a charter, you increase your community's legitimacy via a written record that documents your community's purpose and direction. (See Appendix C: Template for Developing a Community Charter.)

- The "what." These are your activities—the things your community members will do, create, and explore together. They coalesce your community around an initial domain of knowledge, problems to solve, areas of interest, or opportunities to pursue.

- The "who." Essential roles to be defined include

  o Identifying a sponsor—support from senior organizational leadership to provide access and endorsement across the organization

  o Selecting a community leader

  o Identifying and recruiting key members

o   Defining other roles and responsibilities—in the beginning, you may need only a sponsor, a leader, and community members

- The "how." This includes resources and other support. Setting up these may involve securing funding as well as supervisors' agreement to allocate time, materials, and the support of information technology (IT) staff as needed. Especially important are the tools, systems, and technology to enable knowledge sharing and collaboration in different settings.

- Performance measurement. This begins with an initial definition of success and demonstrates your community's contribution to attaining it, whether in a field mission or a Washington-based management unit. In essence, choosing performance measures helps you to answer the question: What will be different or improved because of this community—one, two, or five years from now?

Early in your planning, consider what support you will need from USAID. (Refer to Appendix D: Process Flow for Requesting Community Support, and Appendix E: KfD and Web Services Support Team.)

CHAPTER 3

Getting Started

The second stage in the community life cycle builds on the foundation and begins to give tangible life to the community. Some communities start with a big event or splashy demonstration of value. Others evolve naturally from the planning stage, where knowledge and information are shared more informally, among a core group of founders.

During this phase, the most important issues to address include figuring out how best to work together, what relationships are needed for support, and how to ensure value from your community.

When starting, communities should do the following:

- Make sure that your community's purpose—its "why"—aligns with the larger organization's mission and strategy. Pay particular attention to your business purpose, key objectives, and activities.

  o Ensure a fit with the overall work context, which for USAID involves the extended enterprise of partners—other government agencies, other international donors, grantees and contractors, universities, international government organizations, and practitioners in the field.

  o Examine how your community's work links with the KfD strategy's key features, reflecting USAID's three faces: field (on-the-ground work in developing countries); strategic (planning, policy, design); and operational/hidden (finance, human resources, IT, procurement, communications, legal support, etc.). For USAID's complete KfD strategy, visit the KfD home page: http://knowledge.usaid.gov.

  o Tie the community's work directly into USAID's corporate KfD culture of connecting people, working smarter, and getting results. Each community should identify the best ways for it to share knowledge, communicate, and collaborate. An innovative or sharing community that highlights USAID activities and events will ensure better sustainability and value.

- Identify activities—the "what"—by discovering and learning what can be done together: what to share, what is useful, what is interesting and important.

  o Determine how to share knowledge—what means and modes will best facilitate sharing and exchange.

  o Create new ways of doing business, within the existing organizational structures.

  o Combine routine events with new, exciting ones—develop a community style and rhythm.

  o Conduct and post an inventory of existing knowledge—the nuggets, who has them, who maintains them, how they can serve the community and the larger context (USAID and its extended enterprise).

  o Identify gaps in experience, knowledge, development activities, and resources.

  o Develop new knowledge.

- Define roles and responsibilities—the "who"—to foster community participation.

  o At minimum, include a sponsor, a community leader, and members. (See Appendix F: Roles Played in Communities.)

  o (Continue) cultivating relationships, dialogue, and optimal knowledge exchange among members.

  o Prepare for growth or ways to reach into the extended enterprise—to experts, mentors, consultants, advisors, and members of other communities, including developing-country experts and stakeholders.

- Establish a support structure of IT/tools and people.

  o If not already in place, request the elements required to set up the community.

- o Enlist a facilitator, to foster dialogue, create and maintain energy, focus discussions, help with strategic planning and discovery, etc.

  - o Identify or connect to organizational incentives to collaborate and share knowledge.

- Plan for performance measurement, building on an initial vision of what community success would consist of.

  - o Select a few performance metrics. (See Appendix G: Tips for Developing Key Performance Metrics.)

  - o Test the community's activities and outputs.

  - o Make adjustments where needed.

- Plan training and learning, to ensure that community members are comfortable with the use and operation of community tools.

  - o Conduct training on essential process and IT tools to ensure smooth, effective dialogue, sharing, collaboration, and access to knowledge.

  - o Develop and conduct more intensive community training around tools, facilitation, and other new skills and innovative concepts. A commitment to ongoing learning should be built into the way the community does its work.

- Plan for communications and outreach, to community members and outside.

  - o Communicate among members, within the community itself.

  - o Begin to reach out to other communities, other parts of the Agency, partners, and other members of the extended enterprise.

CHAPTER 4

Management and Governance

Managing communities centers largely on fostering collaboration and communication among people with a shared interest in a particular practice or subject area through active leadership. The community leader—the hands-on manager of a given community—does this through facilitation, connecting people and experience, and guiding discussions to meet the community's goals.

Facilitation is an important way of leveraging the innovative power of social networks to explore solutions, capture innovations, and share experience (see Appendix J: Basic Facilitation Tips). This process derives value from your community for benefits such as improved products and processes, increased retention of talent, and more effective mentoring of new members. These offer positive returns to members and to the larger organization—a USAID operating unit or the Agency as a whole.

Community management, the role of the community leader, and governance evolve as each community grows through stages of development. Initially, your community may have minimal need for explicit management and a relatively flat governance structure. As the community grows, the roles evolve as well, and they may be passed on to others (for a list of roles, see Appendix F: Roles Played in Communities).

While communities are by nature somewhat organic and unpredictable, the roles for management and governance should track with your community's needs at the specific stages of the community life cycle: planning, start-up, growth, maturity, and closure (see Appendix A: Life Cycle of a Community). At the individual community level, management responsibilities should include planning and budgeting (where your organization's funds are allocated) for your community's operation and maintenance. At the Agency or organizational level, management is responsible for developing the process and infrastructure controls needed for launching, building, and sustaining a range of communities, as needed.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Encouraging and harnessing diverse opinions and ideas is essential to your community's work. When bringing together individuals with different experience, backgrounds, institutional affiliations, and community roles, it is inevitable that there will be some disagreement or conflict. Your facilitator and your leader will each need to be prepared to handle instances where opinions are misunderstood; information is misinterpreted; or people resist, disagree, or shut down.

Complicated enough in a face-to-face environment, managing conflict is more challenging within a virtual environment. In virtual communities, there are no physical or auditory communication cues. Online communication often inspires a more distant tone. Busy people may be tempted to read or write quickly. Social norms are less clear and more open to individual interpretation—what is "public" and "private" may not be explicitly known by all, so personal quirks may become more apparent or be given freer rein online. Responsibility for managing conflict is multifold:

- Early on, your leader should help the community develop its guiding principles, norms, and rules of engagement. (For an initial outline, see Appendix H: Operating Principles and Rules of Engagement.)

- Your facilitator should set a healthy tone and environment for collaboration and change. When conflict occurs, the facilitator should clarify, restate, and mediate when needed. The facilitator can examine the behavior and go offline with individuals if necessary. In addition, the facilitator should close discussions when it is time, summarizing and giving feedback.

- Community members should respect the principles of engagement by

  o Making "I" statements ("You…" usually sounds like an accusation)

  o Checking assumptions (what is being read in, based on individual attitudes and beliefs)

  o Listening actively (repeating, restating, checking it out, clarifying)

  o Acknowledging other points of view and respecting differences

- o Trying to communicate clearly and thoughtfully, even when upset

- o Choosing whether or not to respond, or responding privately rather than publicly

- o Assuming that people mean well

- o Putting themselves in others' shoes

- o Keeping everything in perspective

(For more about this, see Appendix L: Basic Facilitation Tips: Managing Conflict in Community.)

MANAGING VALUE AND QUALITY

Because communities are either created for USAID's immediate purposes (connecting people around activities pertaining to internal business or operations) or for use within the broader, external environment of the extended enterprise, your community's content and products should be assessed to determine their value. Community leaders can work with key members of your management team to ensure that activities and processes continue to address important business problems, meet knowledge and information-sharing needs, offer innovative solutions and ideas, and enhance USAID's overall performance and results.

Community operating principles (discussed in Appendix H: Operating Principles and Rules of Engagement) encourage and allow maximum participation by community members. Participation includes engaging in discussions, contributing knowledge, asking questions, and creating products with or for your community. All members can submit content items, but approval by the community leader or content editor may be required prior to posting or publication.

To ensure the quality of the knowledge contributions and knowledge assets, your community leader and content editor should institute a process and procedures for

- • Validating knowledge and good/best practices

- • Capturing discussion and dialogue—cataloguing, labeling, storing, sharing, summarizing/communicating

- Screening/filtering knowledge by subject matter experts before "harvesting" it into knowledge nuggets that would benefit the community, other communities, USAID, and the extended enterprise

- Archiving outdated knowledge and information, both during the life of your community and for legacy purposes when the community is retired

Your community leader should determine the content submission process, in dialogue with other core members of the community's governance and membership. At a minimum, standards for capturing, validating, refreshing, and retiring content include

- Assigning owners to each knowledge object (nugget)

- Ensuring that knowledge objects have minimum associated metadata

- Posting or publishing appropriate knowledge objects

- Flagging knowledge objects for periodic review and potential archiving/retirement

In addition to fostering high-quality content that suits your community's purpose and needs, leadership oversight and guidance should ensure that meetings, discussions, events, products (publications, trainings, lessons learned), and communications and outreach activities fit with your community's needs and organizational purposes as you interact within USAID's overall development environment. The KfD team can help you set up any necessary community support systems.

PROVIDING GUIDANCE AND GOVERNANCE

It is vital to develop a clear understanding about which community members are responsible for individual aspects of your community's care and feeding. This builds trust in your community's abilities to follow through on its stated purpose as the community develops and grows.

KfD can be a conduit for creating and supporting process and infrastructure guidelines, and the KfD team can offer technical assistance in sustaining individual community activities. Your sponsor should assist in

supporting the community by looking for resources and materials to keep it alive and flourishing.

While the KfD team can work closely with interested groups within USAID to support the development of communities, KfD's actual support—as available—will be given to those communities that have demonstrated a clear sense of business need and anticipated organizational gains. KfD will use the following screening questions to assess each community's readiness and likely success:

- Is there top-level sponsorship?

- Is there an existing sense of community?

- Is there a sense of energy and passion around the community?

- What goal or purpose does the community serve? Is there a recognized need that the community can meet, thus providing value to USAID?

- Are there resources (i.e., money and people) to support the community?

CHAPTER 5

Leadership

Community leadership supports the successful achievement of your community's objectives. Leadership is important strategically and operationally: the community leader should guide and manage your community's purpose and intent, and should oversee and ensure the community's relevance, effectiveness, and visibility to USAID and its key stakeholders. (For a description of this and other roles, see Appendix F: Roles Played in Communities.)

RESPONSIBILITIES

Your community leader is responsible for

- Building/maintaining relationships for the community and across communities

- Creating and supporting additional necessary roles within the community

- Managing community resources

- Holding and leading meetings, activities, events, and discussions (or working with the facilitator to do this)

- Fostering an environment that supports continuous learning—before, during, and after an event or activity

- Encouraging innovation and the creative quest for solutions

- Tracking and reporting on community progress and results, and communicating them across the extended enterprise as needed

Leadership can be top-down (determining the objectives, membership, activities, etc.) or bottom-up (community members set the objectives, choose leaders, and plan and conduct community events and activities). Your leader may decide to work across the following three dimensions of community, or some communities may opt to give these functions to different leaders:

- Social networking (the "People Connector")—building and fostering people-to-people interaction within the community

- Knowledge building and sharing (the "Knowledge Connector")—managing and orchestrating content contributions, discussion of content, and the knowledge repository for use by your community and others in USAID's extended enterprise

- Strategic/enterprise (the "Community Ambassador")—making business connections between your community and other communities, and between the community and the extended enterprise; communicating about its value

KfD recommends that your leader help establish the community and nurture its growth, by ensuring

- A common sense of purpose, to meet a real need

- Relevance to members' needs

- A leadership style that suits both your community and USAID

- Passion for learning and exchange among members

- A community "virtual meeting space," accessible anytime

- Periodic and regular face-to-face meetings, as needed

- Informal networks for knowledge sharing

- Established principles of community behavior and participation

- Plans for communications and outreach

- Management of organizational growth and change

FOSTERING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Good leadership is key to your community's ability to flourish and succeed. As noted earlier, community growth is predicated on a blend of engaged membership, a compelling overarching reason to stay together, and the right social networking and people-to-people tools, processes, structures, and systems to support the community's important work.

As your community matures, so must its support systems: the leader and the facilitator each play important roles in overseeing membership development, participation, knowledge sharing, and dialogue. Together with the facilitator, the community leader manages the style and flow of knowledge contributions, discussions, events, or activities needed to encourage ongoing individual and group learning. All are important to your community's evolution.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

With a community's emerging maturity, leaders often face a number of challenges, many of which can be turned into learning opportunities. These include

- Making a transition from a small, new group to a more mature community that draws fresh members into core community activities

- Reexamining the community's purpose and mandate

- Being responsive to shifting requirements for interaction and knowledge exchange styles

- Replacing or modifying collaboration tools or systems

Throughout, it is important that your leader and facilitator work explicitly to cultivate flexibility and adaptability, both among community members and during your community's interactions with others in USAID's extended enterprise.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Facilitation (described in Appendix F: Roles Played in Communities) is the glue that fosters and engages member interaction. An expert in group dynamics, your facilitator orchestrates the people and process functions and activities of the community. Working in either face-to-face or virtual settings, the facilitator fulfills such responsibilities as

- Coordinating and facilitating discussions and meetings

- Fostering participation in community events

- Seeding and feeding discussion topics and providing closure when needed

- Giving constructive feedback; serving as mentor, coach, and trainer for the social aspects of community; and managing conflict. (For more support, see Appendixes J–L: Basic Facilitation Tips, or contact the KfD team at KfD@usaid.gov)

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Your community leader should help members assume responsibility for determining and measuring the community's success. Having community members set the performance criteria will ensure stronger ownership and better performance—**what you measure is what you do.** In addition, by encouraging support for continuous learning—conducting brief progress reviews before, during, and after community activities and events—the leader can help your community select some initial success criteria, which can become foundations for community performance metrics. (For more guidance, see Appendix G: Tips for Developing Key Performance Metrics, and Appendix I: The After-Action Review.)

Indicative measures of community performance include

- Number (or type) of community-developed language, definitions, or tools

- Methodologies shared

- Awareness of what community members know about, do, and contribute

- Reduction in time needed to solve problems

- Drop in re-work (work that needs redoing)

- Number of innovative/breakthrough ideas

- Reduction in (costly) mistakes

- Number of best practices adopted

- Success stories

- Results from administration of regular progress questionnaires

ONGOING REVIEWS

Early in your community's development and periodically through its life cycle, your community leader should review the community charter to revalidate key assumptions, purpose, expected outputs and outcomes, rules for process and participation, membership criteria, usefulness of tools, etc. Any observed discrepancies or disconnects would indicate a need to adjust systems or processes, to enable your community to continue to be vibrant and relevant to USAID's mission and business.

Keep in mind that communities are dynamic systems. If your community is no longer useful, if membership and participation decrease significantly, or if your collective work is complete, the products can be archived and the community can be retired. (See Chapter 8: Closing a Community.)

INTEGRATION WITH THE REAL WORLD

To ensure effective, lasting value and traction, your community should strive for integration into USAID's business practice, linking with the rest of USAID's "environment"—the extended enterprise. Real-world integration involves activities to

- Contribute community-developed critical knowledge to the extended enterprise, and maintain the knowledge; raise the profile of community members within the extended enterprise

- Span organizational boundaries, across work units, communities, and partner structures

- Demonstrate the value of participation and interaction—face-to-face and virtual

Finally, as USAID's individual communities enhance their usefulness to the Agency through ongoing knowledge sharing, training and other forms of skills development, organizational growth, and higher employee productivity, they will demonstrate lasting value as agents of thought leadership and innovation. Your leader should look for opportunities to showcase community contributions across the extended enterprise. These can be built into overall plans and programs of change management. (For more information, see Chapter 9: Change Management, and Appendix M: Change Management Basics.)

The Role of the Community Members

ABOUT COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

The essence of a community is its members, who are not mere teammates or work colleagues. Rather, the community acts as a "force multiplier," encouraging the best aspects of a democracy. Communities transcend traditional organizational boundaries. They offer current and potential members a neutral place to think, explore, ask and answer questions, and share ideas and experience. The very act of interacting with fellow community members through an online tool can influence the direction and patterns of workflow. Hierarchical levels are minimized, and community members are recognized and respected for their diverse skills, expertise, and contributions.

Community membership is generally voluntary rather than prescribed. Members choose to participate because **they get value** from their participation. That includes

- Continuous learning as a result of participation

- Recognition among peers within a community

- Support for solving daily problems

- A shorter learning curve, because they can refer to the prior experience of other recognized experts

- Opportunities to connect with colleagues who have shared interests, background, and experience (often related to a particular subject, topic, or activity)

- Increased productivity and job satisfaction

HOW TO JOIN A COMMUNITY

To join a community, contact the community leader or find an existing member to act as a sponsor and recommend you to the leader. As membership is generally voluntary, most communities will welcome any sincere inquiries about membership.

You can join as many communities as you like, but keep in mind that the quality of your membership will roughly correspond to the amount of time you dedicate to each community.

COMMUNITY BEHAVIOR

A good community member actively participates by…

- Presenting new and relevant information to the community to promote knowledge sharing

- Sharing his or her expert knowledge and analysis

- Presenting stimulating problems for consideration

- Identifying relevant information outside of the community

- Bolstering community membership by spreading the word

- Updating and replenishing community information

- Developing rules governing community interaction and assets

- Keeping personal contact information updated (inactive accounts without current contact information may be administratively deleted)

- Alerting the community leader to inaccurate or out-of-date information

…and displays good community etiquette by

- Appreciating diversity of thought and perspective

- Forgiving people's mistakes and only pointing them out by private email rather than in public

- Not promoting personal agendas or marketing commercial items

- Not abusing email privileges; where permission to send bulk email to a community exists, it should be used sparingly

(For more information about expectations for membership behavior and contributions, see Appendix H: Operating Principles and Rules of Engagement.)

HOW TO LEAVE A COMMUNITY

As mentioned above, your membership is voluntary and ends when you decide to leave the community. If you plan to leave a community, be sure to notify your community leader.

CHAPTER 7

Maintaining and Sustaining a Community

Maintaining and sustaining your community includes nurturing the expertise within the group, building in incentives for participation, monitoring performance, and ensuring ongoing resources, while keeping a balance between sustaining the group and stimulating continued growth. USAID helps maturing communities continue to flourish and succeed via consultation based on KfD's expertise in the people-process-technology matrix, backed up by Web Services's offerings in tools and information technology infrastructure and support.

NURTURING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY EXPERTISE

That a community keeps generating and sharing expertise is an important sign of its value to its members and the larger organization. Noteworthy benefits may include integration of your community's activities with the larger organization's lines of business, as well as more and stronger connections between community members and the organization. As they do in earlier stages in community development, your community's management and leadership can help direct the focus and products of your community's expertise to maintain a fit with your members' needs and with the activities and programs of USAID—the larger organization.

As your community matures, your leader should remain an active participant in the community's substantive activities, using facilitation and active listening to draw out the best from your group process. Maintaining connections to other communities, and connecting community outputs to needs in USAID and its extended enterprise, will help ensure the community's continued value.

BUILDING INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION

Establishing incentives to share and use the community can help keep collaboration interesting for your community's members. Even a successful community can risk becoming stagnant. By recognizing members'

contributions and the utility of community products, managers and leaders can provide incentives and a sense of return on the time that members invest in your community. This will help keep knowledge exchanges fresh, and it will encourage experimentation, learning, and innovation.

In addition, it is important to foster USAID's overall commitment to your community, through incentives for individual and group participation. Your community leader and sponsor should look for opportunities to build in structures that reward and sustain your community as **the place to be—where the real work happens**. That recognition can be communicated to other communities, within USAID and across the extended enterprise.

MONITORING COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE

Performance measurement (see Appendix G: Tips for Developing Key Performance Metrics) helps provide tangible evidence—either qualitative or quantitative—that your community is productive and important. Selecting relatively few indicators that are easily gathered and help tell your community's story will drive more successful outreach efforts. Monitoring can also help community and organizational leaders direct efforts toward areas of community interaction that may require more attention or course correction.

Using After-Action Reviews for key events (see Appendix I: The After-Action Review) can help to track accomplishments, document successes, and identify areas needing improvement. This type of active learning before, during, and after events, whether face-to-face or virtual, builds credibility in the group process and increases individual members' commitment to the work of their community.

ENSURING ADEQUATE RESOURCES

The resources required to run a community may be as simple as time to meet, or they may be as complex as travel to events, development and maintenance of online tools, and paid facilitation. Your leader and sponsor should start small, with an eye on cost implications. This will prevent too-rapid growth and will avoid overselling a new community. During your community's maintenance phase, active participation by your leaders and sponsors will help keep your community "on the budget map." If your

group is loose-knit or spread across the organization, you will need more active, targeted outreach and communications to main your community's visibility.

Your community's resource requirements also extend to its people and processes. Your leaders should remain aware of the community's need for new members and ideas, balancing these against the risk of overextending the group's purpose and activities beyond its ability to perform. This will help avoid saddling a successful community with new mandates outside a reasonable scope. Leaders should be sure to network the community well enough with the larger organization's lines of business so that new members can step up to replace those moving on.

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE

Through its commitment to the Communities@USAID initiative, KfD continues to be available to help more seasoned communities carry on their work, share knowledge, learn through experience and skills development, and interact with other communities and other units in USAID's extended enterprise. KfD offers communities some continuity of support via

- Guidance and standards for community establishment, management, practice, skills development, training and learning, and measurement

- Outreach and communications about your community's successes, lessons, and needs—to other communities, to other parts of USAID, across and among the members of the extended enterprise, and with other industry researchers or experts in knowledge management

- Technical support via phone/email contacts, for help, guidance, and training

- Facilitation/coaching—help with face-to-face and virtual meetings and events; coaching and training of community facilitators (using knowledge management tools such as the After-Action Review and knowledge mapping); targeted discussion or planning sessions; knowledge retention interviews; content and knowledge sharing; and reporting/sharing of lessons learned

- Training and skills development—through a variety of adult learning media, in collaboration with training teams from the Bureau for Management's human resources office; this reflects USAID's commitment to building cadres of classmates and professional peers across technical areas throughout the careers of its staff

- Support for performance measurement—via standards and guidelines for selecting indicators and measuring community results

- Change management coaching and support—taking a "big picture" view that integrates communities into USAID's field, strategic, and operational work and shares community lessons and experience across the enterprise

Working in partnership with Web Services, KfD offers communities ongoing technical support in the use of tools and USAID's information technology system. These include

- Tool installation/structure, keeping in mind that some communities may not require or be qualified or ready to use Communities@USAID tools until they are at the "maturity" phase of growth

- Help, problem-solving/technical troubleshooting, growing tools to suit the needs of the community itself. This includes developing guidelines about the role of fee-for-service development and implementation of a commitment to "lifelong learning" as USAID's KfD practices become more firmly embedded in Agency processes

CHAPTER 8

Closing a Community

There may come a time when a community needs to close down. Communities can reach a natural end to their lifecycle, based on when the need for the group has been fulfilled, the job is completed, or the work of the community has been "baked into" the USAID organization. Closing a community is an important part of keeping the larger practice of communities alive and well. No one likes to meet merely for meeting's sake. Your community should not stay in existence past its usefulness to the members and to USAID.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The measures you set in place to capture solutions developed, faster problem solving, reduced mistakes, and best practices adopted can be brought forward to help build a lasting picture of your community's good work and accomplishments. Being able to answer "What was it all about?" is important. Leaving behind a story that can be told through individual and collective performance measures helps future efforts to reuse and incorporate community outputs.

As one measure of community success, the After-Action Review provides a handy time capsule to capture what was intended, what actually happened, what went well (and why), and what to improve (and how). By using this tool, your community can wrap up its own activity and leave behind tangible lessons for future efforts. (See Appendix I: The After-Action Review.)

BUILD A LEGACY

Many communities find that there is renewed interest in what they have accomplished or new uses for their outputs long after the initial membership has disbanded. By making the community's most valuable content available via an archive or catalogue, along with information about its activities, members, products, and systems, USAID can more easily build on earlier experience as new challenges emerge. Drawing on KfD support for virtual communities and the Communities@USAID

website, your community is assured that its online assets will be captured, preserved, and available for future use.

CLOSE OUT THE TOOL

If you have used an online tool, either through the Communities@USAID website or elsewhere, it is important to close it out as well. No one is served by trying to use online resources without being sure of their timeliness and accuracy. Consider what material to retain for a formal record and what is simply part of the evolutionary process of community and not worth preserving. By clearly labeling material "archival" and noting where final products were generated or are now incorporated elsewhere, you can help build an understanding of your community's areas of expertise and your community's connections and contributions to USAID's ongoing development work.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Go out with a bang, not a whimper. There can be a tendency to let a community trail off until all of a sudden someone notices that it is gone. With good leadership, you can avoid or mitigate this pitfall and end things on a high note. Even if a community's work dwindles, do not let good work go unheralded. Take the time to write up what was accomplished, what was learned, what carries forward, and what is next.

Communities and their members come from somewhere and go to somewhere. Help explain both these dimensions in your brief closeout material. You will have also created a marketing piece that boosts interest in any expected follow-on activities. By documenting this fit with USAID and/or its extended enterprise, you can help assure the legacy of your group and build a more solid foundation for future efforts.

Change Management

USAID has a long history of support for teams and teamwork. Agency staff and management acknowledge the existence of both formal and informal networks where people come together around a task or an idea. Still, the "communities" concept is a new one, and there is much to be learned about building communities into USAID's business practices and structures. With support from KfD, Web Services, and various individual units of USAID, the rewards to be gained from starting and fostering communities are beginning to emerge.

Taking communities farther, so that they are given and necessary elements of USAID's support structure, requires institutional shifts—in perception, behavior, recognition, and endorsement. Change management comes in stages, and it requires

- **A compelling need for change:** It must be made clear that communities may accomplish what business as usual—staying within traditional organizational boxes—will not. The stronger the perceived need, the greater the likelihood that senior managers, staff, and other stakeholders will support the introduction and implementation of change. The need for change must be considered strong enough to justify investing the time and money required for communities to grow and thrive.

- **Clarity of direction:** A clear, focused, long-term vision will provide guidance when an organization faces divergent choices, conflicting viewpoints, or resistance to change. To be effective, the vision must be understood in operational terms by all parties.

- **Visible and committed leadership:** Without an executive sponsor who is well positioned to support your community's goals and objectives, competing organizational teams and priorities may undermine the case you are making for your community's value and purpose. In large organizations, the sponsor often delegates leadership to operational managers who are responsible for change. A big factor contributing to success is the degree to which senior managers and

front-line managers are viewed as a team that is visibly in support of communities.

- **Targeted, effective communications:** Keep the larger organization informed about what is going on within your community. Your message should be consistent. Also, you should encourage understanding and buy-in by insisting on two-way communication. Fostering open dialogue will mitigate possible resistance, polarization of groups, and the chance of weak or insufficient support from USAID's leaders and senior managers.

- **A single program focus:** Taking on too many competing tasks or activities can dilute your community's effectiveness and detract from the primary change your community seeks.

For assistance in supporting your community's role in a larger change management process, contact the KfD team: kfd@usaid.gov. Also, see Appendix M: Change Management Basics.

CHAPTER 10

Communications and Outreach

Effective and comprehensive communications are essential to the success of your community. They get members connected, establish a foundation for knowledge sharing, and help to ensure that information about important activities is conveyed to the larger organization and potential members.

OBJECTIVES FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The major objectives of outreach and communication for a USAID community are to

- Create awareness of your community's resources and evolving capabilities

- Stimulate existing community members to contribute and share knowledge within the community, by providing examples of this behavior and by highlighting new content or discussions

- Increase involvement of members in developing and evaluating community content and expertise

- Encourage USAID and its extended enterprise to use knowledge-sharing tools

- Educate USAID and its extended enterprise about the value of communities and their potential benefit to development

- Encourage buy-in for and use of best practices and tools

- Promote USAID as a leader in the creation and use of communities

TARGET AUDIENCES

A community's target audience is composed of anyone whose work and daily life could benefit by joining it. Some of the potential audiences for community outreach are

- USAID/Washington staff, including

    o Senior USAID staff

    o USAID contractors and grantees

- USAID staff in the field (via virtual collaboration), including

    o Foreign service officers

    o Foreign service nationals

    o USAID contractors and grantees

- Retired USAID staff

- Other U.S. government agencies working in international development (such as the U.S. Departments of State, Agriculture, Treasury, and Health and Human Services)

- Other international government organizations

- Members of academia involved in international development

KEY MESSAGES

Promoting communities as important vehicles for carrying out USAID's everyday work will require a shift in thinking, in behavior, and in the way USAID conducts its business. Since communities are defined and brought to life by their members, reaching potential members is pivotal to the success of each community. Your leaders and members will have the primary responsibility for reaching out to potential new members. The bullets below can provide a starting point for your membership outreach. You can customize each item to suit your community's needs.

Messages for all communities

- Communities provide members with an information resource and a network of potential partners for collaborative problem solving.

- Communities are for development professionals who want to be insiders within their vocation. Members who participate actively can stay on the "inside track" within their fields.

**Messages for communities supported by the
Communities@USAID portal (http://ecco.usaidallnet.gov)**

- Communities@USAID provides USAID and its partners with access to development experience and an accessible connection to USAID's policy resources and information.

- Communities@USAID connects development professionals to development know-how 24/7, via communities centered on specific career field areas or business processes, special interest areas, or targeted workspaces. It is an online place where staff from the field and Washington can collaborate and share best practices.

For more information and recommended ways to spread your community's message and promote its work, refer to Appendix N: Communications and Outreach. Or you may contact the KfD team for advice and assistance at kfd@usaid.gov.

Life Cycle of a Community

Drawing heavily on the structure and ideas presented in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Knowledge Management*, our model of USAID's community life cycle includes five key stages, each with its own set of important activities.

PLANNING

- Draw membership from a loose network of individuals with similar interests, capabilities, and needs

- Carry out dialogue about the need

- Define the domain of knowledge to share—along with scope, purpose, core activities—and formalize in community charter

- Engage management—management can provide resources and help remove organizational boundaries

START-UP

- Recruit/engage core members (the right representation)

- Align with current culture (means for sharing knowledge, style and schedule for dialogue and collaboration, other activities)

- Align with organizational strategy (ensure fit with the business purpose, key objectives and activities)

- Design roles and responsibilities (e.g., members, leader, facilitator, other experts, consultants, senior members or advisors, sponsors)

- Identify what success looks like

- Develop support structure of information technology and people (request community set-up and use of online collaborative tool; line up facilitator)

- Launch with key events

- Learn and discover what can be done together: what to share, what is useful, how to collaborate

- Plan for initial communications and outreach

GROWTH

- Recognize that the community will evolve over time—the mandate will change

- Increase membership, if appropriate (handle expansion with care)

- Monitor and encourage expansion and changes in roles and relationships, as good work is being done

- Track increases in effectiveness—community is becoming more visible

- Engage in communications and outreach

- Plan for and support initial change management within the larger organization of which the community is a part

MATURITY

- Look for ways to capture and revitalize the expertise of the community

- Develop and refine tools

- Conduct performance monitoring, looking at accomplishments, successes, areas to improve

- Ensure ongoing resources: money, people, time, tools, materials

- Preserve a balance between sustaining and continuing to grow

- Carry out communications/outreach

- Support change management efforts

CLOSING OUT

- End when appropriate: when the job is done, the need no longer exists, or the work is "baked into" normal organizational culture

- Conclude performance monitoring (collect information on key indicators and learning through the After-Action Review)

- Ensure legacy (content, activities, membership, products, systems); cull transient material and archive items of lasting value

- Close out the tool(s)

- Update past and potential future beneficiaries of the community's work: what was accomplished, what was learned, what carries forward, where it "lives," what is next

Communities@USAID Questionaire

No two communities are identical; however, successful communities tend to be founded upon a clear purpose. The form below is designed to help you think through your community's role in the context of its prospective members and USAID's mission. It will also let the KfD team know better how they can support your community. Please fill this out and send it to KfD@usaid.gov.

1. What is the purpose of your community?
    (Be specific—for example: "share ideas and innovations for developing program indicators," "capture innovative solutions for improved financial management.")

2. How do your community's objectives support USAID's goals and mission?
    (Please briefly list the objectives and their relation to USAID's goals and mission.)

3. Who are your key stakeholders and community members?
    (Please list the types of external and internal members needed to
    make this a successful community.)

4. How long do you envision the community lasting?

5. How often will you meet?
    (Please provide an illustrative list of face-to-face meetings and any
    virtual meetings/discussions that you anticipate.)

6. What knowledge assets or information resources does your
    community need?

7. What resources are required to support your community? (Please list, e.g., staff support, IT tools, and logistical support for meetings/workshops.)

8. How have you defined the roles needed to support your community? (Please list the roles and their functions, if possible. For example: sponsor, community leader, facilitator, members, and subject matter experts.)

9. How does your community define success? (How will you know that you are achieving the community's purpose? Choose a few relevant, clearly defined performance measures that can be easily collected. For example, you could track methodologies shared, best practices adopted, innovative/breakthrough ideas presented or discussed, etc.)

Template for Developing a Community Charter

Working with your leader, sponsor, and a facilitator, the members should create a community charter. Doing this in a facilitated workshop will help community members come together quickly, focused on a finite, common task. The charter can be discussed, modified, agreed to, and posted in your community space.

For facilitation or coaching, contact the KfD team at KfD@usaid.gov.

Community Name:
(Identify your community's name, e.g., Logistics CoP.)

Community Membership/Audience:
(Identify the functional types that your community is targeting or is trying to attract, e.g., contracts officers, program officers, partners working in the education sector.)

Community Purpose/Intent:
(Identify the purpose/intent of your community, e.g., a focus on documenting, sharing, and transferring best practices.)

Type of Community or Knowledge Area:
(Identify the type of virtual space that best supports your community's purpose.)

Community Objectives:
(Identify the specific areas/issues that your community is interested in addressing.)

Community Roles:
(Identify by name the individuals who are filling these roles.)

Sponsor   _____

Leader   _____

Content editor _____

Others   _____

Critical Business Issues:
(Identify the critical business issues faced by your community, e.g., providing a forum for specialists to share tips and techniques.)

Resources:
(Identify what is required to support your community, e.g., the resources that are available, support from contractors, any content that needs to be developed.)

Measures of Success:
(List a few important measures of success, e.g., fewer mistakes, reduced time needed to solve problems, best practices adopted, etc.)

Executive Sponsor:
(Identify an individual with policy clout.)

Process Flow for Requesting Support for a Community

Like a living organism, a community progresses from birth to maturity along a path or timeline that suits its purpose and structure. Different phases will require different types and levels of support.

The steps outlined below constitute the main steps for requesting USAID community support. Information and outreach materials about Communities@USAID can be found by visiting the KfD website (http://knowledge.usaid.gov), by contacting kfd@usaid.gov, or through face-to-face meetings or conversations with the KfD team in close partnership with USAID's Web Services. The process is as follows:

1. Contact KfD: Schedule a concept meeting to scope out your community's membership, objectives, critical business issues, and initial knowledge assets. If appropriate, continue with the steps below.

2. Draft your community's charter: Establish a community structure; identify and describe your communications needs. In consultation with your community leader and sponsor, set up a basic community using USAID's collaboration space.

3. Develop a schedule for meetings/events: How will your community work together? Identify any face-to-face meetings needed (including a kick-off meeting), the schedule of discussions, other key events.

4. Inventory and organize knowledge assets: What knowledge is already resident in your community? Who has it, where is it, what type of knowledge is it (and in what form), how would you describe it, what else is needed? Create an organizing structure for the content and determine where each contribution belongs in your structure. Cross-reference as needed.

5. Review any additional information technology requirements: The KfD team can help you determine if virtual collaboration on

Communities@USAID Online is a good fit for your community's need. Partnered with USAID's Web Services, the team can work with community leaders and members to ensure successful online collaboration.

6. Identify key content specialists and subject matter experts: The community leader should identify and invite those content specialists and subject matter experts who can bring value to your community. Working with KfD, the leader should verify these memberships. Next, USAID's Web Services will add the names into the community space.

7. Train leaders and members in community behavior: Arrange for training through online manuals, mentoring, and face-to-face or virtual coaching for key members of the community and your leader. This could include training in facilitation and in the use of USAID's tools for community collaboration. USAID's Web Services can provide additional support and mentoring through its help desk.

8. Market the community: Serve as ambassadors for your community. Your marketing and outreach activities—in person or through newsletters, handouts, websites, and other communications channels—will increase exposure for the community, build membership, and ensure viability for your processes and products.

9. Update content/stay relevant: As your community grows and evolves, new issues arise and your focus areas may change. The community leader and content editor should conduct periodic reviews of your community's content and plan how to close any identified knowledge gaps. Archive materials when needed.

10. Determine your community's effectiveness: Verify that your community is meeting its stated purpose and objectives. Establish a few key performance indicators. Drawing on use statistics available through the online tool and your own performance monitoring, measure your community's early and ongoing success. Make management adjustments accordingly.

11. Close out your community (when appropriate): Is the important work finished? Is the need no longer there? Has USAID's culture adopted your community's activities and accomplishments and built them into USAID's normal, everyday work? What did you accomplish? What was learned? Where will your members go or what will they do next? Be sure to capture or transfer all of your community's important products or "knowledge assets" so they become part of USAID's institutional memory. Contact KfD and Web Services to archive and close down your community space.

KfD and Web Services Support Team

TEAM ROLES

The Communities@USAID support team will provide the operational infrastructure, procedural guidelines, technical support, user support, and direct community support for the major communities assisted through the KfD Program. The team is responsible for the following services and functions:

- KfD support services and training: The team provides training, deployment, and startup functions, as well as process and infrastructure support for communities. Specific areas of responsibility include

    o   Performing the functions of a chief administrator for the community—to manage consistent community look and feel, member administration, security, content management processes, and permission-based rules

    o   Advising and consulting with potential communities

    o   Conducting tool training and offering community development support

    o   Developing and maintaining templates (offered as a fee-for-service contract in coordination with the Web Services team)

    o   Supporting HTML, graphic, and instructional design (offered as a fee-for-service contract in coordination with the Web Services team)

    o   Developing additional software add-ons (offered as a fee-for-service contract in coordination with the Web Services team)

o Performing outreach, marketing, and communications support—to help leaders and facilitators market communities to new recruits and beneficiaries, advertise successes and events, etc.

- Providing templates, mailing lists, and "boilerplate" or sample marketing materials

- Publishing marketing materials and handouts (offered as a fee-for-service contract)

- Publishing articles in subject-appropriate magazines and newsletters;

- Speaking at events specific to the community

- Advertising your community successes

- Technical support/infrastructure development: The Web Services team, trained in the tool technology, offers technical support for network issues, server operations, and hardware and software upgrades

- User technical support: Community members may contact the Web Services team for help with technical questions on the use and functionality of the tool. The team supports basic tool functionality and member access to KfD (e.g., handling password-related issues, offering basic Level 1 support)

Roles Played In Communities

BENEFITS OF ROLES

Clearly defined roles, carried out by specific individuals, will ensure that your community is well prepared to carry out your work. In addition, the roles help direct community members to the proper sources of guidance, direction, or information. Meeting expectations around these roles and responsibilities will allow your community members to become and stay involved, thus increasing their affinity to the community and ensuring greater overall value. Defining the necessary roles will benefit your community by

- Ensuring that the community is being taken seriously, reinforcing and encouraging participation

  o Providing recognition and legitimacy throughout the organization

  o Helping secure funding (through sponsorship and leadership)

  o Offering strategic direction

  o Sparking other communities

- Providing continuity, to help members maintain a steady course

  o Ensuring grounding for your community's purpose and practice

  o Connecting to your community's purpose—through collective or individual documents, stories, histories

  o Bridging or weathering organizational reorganizations, change, and new directions

- Offering structure and balance

  o Helping your members share knowledge and expertise

  o Setting the direction and course

A diverse set of roles, combined with other governance and structural elements (purpose, domain, principles, and collaboration tools or a space), are needed to launch and sustain a community. Your community's size and scope will determine which of these roles can be combined with others. At minimum, you will need a sponsor, a leader, and some members.

TYPES OF ROLES NEEDED

Role	Description	Responsibilities	Knowledge Required
Sponsor	Nurtures and provides top-level recognition for the community; ensures exposure, support, and strategic importance in the organization; the champion	• Ties community and benefits to organization's strategic objectives • Advocates community acceptance and recognition within organization and with senior managers • Connects community with necessary resources (budget, other) • Works with leaders to support other roles and to track progress	Insight/under-standing relative to the community's knowledge and overall domain, which may involve one or more subjects (procurement, program manage-ment, policy) or sectors (global health, education, economic growth, etc.)
Leader	Guides and manages the community: helps define its purpose and strategic intent; works to ensure the community's relevance and visibility to the organization and key stakeholders	• Works across social, knowledge, and strategic enterprise dimensions • Builds/maintains relationships for the community and across communities • Supports and creates additional roles • Manages resources • Leads meetings, activities, events, discussions • Tracks and reports on progress and results	Insight and understanding relative to the community's knowledge domain

Role	Description	Responsibilities	Knowledge Required
Core team member	Provides guidance and leadership before or after a leader emerges/ is selected; provides ongoing organizational support	• Planning: mission, purpose, boundaries, and norms • Coordinates with community leader: nominates, then supports and advises • Helps with initial decisionmaking • Provides momentum to sustain community evolution • Provides communications quality control (for content, information, accurancy, timeliness, and process) • Keeps community on task and on purpose	Substantive knowledge relative to the community's domain; knowledge of the organization and its goals and objectives; experience with knowledge management
Community member	Active "ownership" in the community, shaping the boundary of the practice or expertise; drives the community's level of commitment and growth (Membership is voluntary)	• Participates and engages in events and activities • Shares knowledge and expertise, raises good questions, and contributes to conversations and discussions • Helps establish governance, norms, culture, and policies	Substantive knowledge and experience in business practice domains of the community

Role	Description	Responsibilities	Knowledge Required
Facilitator	Fosters and facilitates member interaction; energizes and motivates the community; expert in group process and dynamics, orchestrating the people and process functions (including creating products)	• Coordinates and facilitates discussions and meetings (face-to-face and virtual) • Encourages participation in events and activities • Seeds and feeds discussion • Provides closure when necessary • Gives constructive feedback • Provides mentoring, coaching, and training in human and social aspects • Manages conflict and disagreements	Insight into and understanding of the content area and processes that are the community's focus; skills in process facilitation, organizational development, team building, group and organizational dynamics; ability to encourage innovation
Knowledge manager	Overall knowledge champion or promoter for the community; provides guidance and direction under which the community operates	• Project manager (initial phases of community assessment and design) • Guides definition of long- and short-term objectives • Provides leadership in defining knowledge management processes • Guides development of approach for adopting knowledge tools and techniques • With community, develops a common vocabulary for members and a system for classifying and disseminating knowledge	Insight into and understanding of knowledge and process domain of the community; clear understanding of nature of knowledge in an organizational context; ability to recognize and encourage innovation and transfer competency

Role	Description	Responsibilities	Knowledge Required
Content coordinator/ editor	Ultimate source of explicit knowledge; searches, retrieves, transfers, and responds to direct requests for knowledge and content	• Facilitates/coordinates digital or physical library or repository • Ensures that intellectual capital is categorized • Ensures that members can find important data and information • Archives outdated material • Cross-references and submits information from outside the community	Insight into and understanding of the community's knowledge and process domain; understanding of editing and tools for organizing knowledge
Subject matter expert	Keepers of the community's knowledge domain or practice; center of specialized tacit knowledge for the community and its members	• Develops and communicates deep expertise and tacit knowledge • Harvests and creates new knowledge • Serves as base for thought leadership and expertise • Contributes subject matter knowledge to all community activities • Acts as mentor (with members) for developing new, innovative ways of working • Suggests topics for face-to-face meetings; participates in meetings	Several years of service within the organization; extensive understanding of the overall knowledge domain and processes of the community; experience with the extended enterprise

Role	Description	Responsibilities	Knowledge Required
Mentor	Community "elder"; helps new members navigate the community, its norms and policies, and where they fit in the organization	• Welcomes and invites new members • Introduces and orients members to community norms and policies • Motivates/encourages participation in events, activities, and discussions • Shares knowledge and lessons with other members (community history stewardship)	Several years of service within the organization; understanding of the knowledge domain and process of the community; experience with the extended enterprise
Outreach/ commun- ications coordinator	Focal point for all member and community communications, marketing and outreach activities	• Works with leader to develop process/practice for ongoing community communications • With leader and members, develops and implements marketing and outreach strategy • Works with members and leader to release noteworthy items and news to the organization and extended enterprise	Background pertinent to the process and knowledge domain of the community; marketing, outreach, communications expertise; knowledge of extended enterprise
Admin/ events coordinator	Coordinates, organizes, and plans community events and activities	• Identifies ongoing events aligning with overall community objectives • Plans, conducts, hosts or chairs events • Creates and maintains community public relations • Sends out invitations and marketing materials	Insight and knowledge relative to the knowledge and process domain of the community; organizational and outreach experience

Role	Description	Responsibilities	Knowledge Required
Technologist	Oversees and maintains the community's infrastructure (the collaborative technology); helps members navigate the tools and other technology (as identified/needed)	• Works with IT, facilitator, and leader to design community's space—its look and feel • Sets up access privileges, passwords, user names, profiles • Coordinates with tech teams and IT staff to ensure quality, performance, and reliability • Provides other technical and logistical support	IT experience; knowledge of community tools and systems; ability to translate/navigate between technology and people's needs

Tips for Developing Key Performance Metrics

WHY ARE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IMPORTANT?

Performance indicators define data to be collected to measure progress on results and may be used to compare planned versus actual results at defined intervals. They offer a useful management tool that can help to promote the growth of individual communities and to institute their widespread use in management units throughout USAID.

In simple terms, metrics may justify the continued existence of your community and its ongoing support from higher levels within USAID. Performance indicators and the data collected about your community help orient and motivate leaders and community members toward achievement. Results from your community's work can be shared with a variety of audiences within USAID and across its extended enterprise.

STEPS IN SELECTING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Selecting appropriate and useful performance indicators is a fairly straightforward process. It requires careful thought, iterative refining, collaboration, and consensus building. Here are some suggested steps:

Step 1. Clarify the results to be achieved.

Good performance indicators reflect a clear and unambiguous statement of desired results that a group of strangers can come to easy agreement on. Carefully consider the result desired. Avoid overly broad results statements where it becomes difficult to understand clearly what is being measured.

Step 2. Develop a list of possible indicators.

There are usually many possible indicators for any desired outcome, but some are more appropriate and useful than others. Not all indicators need be used to measure your community's success or performance. Brainstorm all possible indicators.

Step 3: Assess each indicator.
Assess each indicator for its utility and its relevance to the desired result.

Step 4. Select the "best" performance indicators.
Narrow your list to the the optimum set that meets the need for information useful to management at a reasonable cost. Be selective, and balance an indicator's benefits against the costs of data collection and analysis. Choose only essential indicators.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Direct. A performance indicator should measure as closely as possible the result it is intended to measure.

2. Objective. An objective indicator has no ambiguity about what is being measured, that is, there is general agreement over interpretation of the results.

3. Adequate. Taken as a group, a performance indicator and its companion indicators should adequately measure the desired result. Try to strike a balance between resources available for measuring performance and the amount of information needed to identify your community's success or progress.

4. Quantitative, where possible. Quantitative indicators are numerical (e.g., number or percentage of dollar value, time, etc.). Qualitative indicators are descriptive observations (an expert opinion of institutional strength, or a description of behavior). While quantitative indicators are not necessarily more objective, their numerical precision lends itself to more agreement on the interpretation of results data, and thus are usually preferable. However, even when effective quantitative indicators are used, qualitative indicators can supplement the numbers and percentages with rich information that can bring your community activities and results to life.

5. Practical. When selecting your indicators, be sure that your community's performance data can be obtained in a timely way and at a reasonable cost in dollars and effort.

6. Reliable. Finally, ask if you can obtain data that are reliable enough for confident decisionmaking.

Operating Principles and Rules of Engagement

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Communities of practice are only as valuable as the information they contain and the willingness of their members to participate. For communities using online support, the community leaders, content editors, and subject matter experts are responsible for managing the content.

Looking across the participating community, the KfD Support Team monitors the program to ensure quality. KfD leadership reserves the right to take communities offline that are not maintained, fall below a minimum level of quality, or do not directly support USAID and its work processes and products. Quality will be measured in terms of currency of material, accuracy of material, and activity within the community (number and type of contributions, use and reuse, innovation, etc.).

USAID's communities should follow these general operating principles:

- A community's purpose addresses its "business drivers" (reasons a community was created) and contributes to the achievement of USAID's development objectives.

- Membership is voluntary—participation in communities is not mandatory.

- Communities are self-directing—they set their own agenda and determine their own focus.

- Online communities are responsible for the configuration and maintenance of their content (content must be regularly reviewed for accuracy, outdated content removed or archived, etc.). KfD can assist with the details of maintaining online communities, as needed.

- Community members have full control over how their workspace is used to meet community needs and interests, including structure and content. All spaces will adhere to a consistent community theme/user interface, thereby easing navigation.

- Community roles are assigned and operate in accordance with the KfD's established business rules.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

KfD's concept for communities adheres to the following rules of engagement:

- KfD supports largely **unclassified** communities. As a rule, do not contribute Classified, Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU), NOFORN (Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals), or For Official Use Only (FOUO) material. Please view the privacy policy available on request from kfd@usaid.gov for more information.

- Additionally, business-sensitive, copyrighted (without owner's permission), or proprietary information, and/or unlicensed or restricted software, cannot be contributed to the community site. Instead of posting copyrighted material, consider inserting a hyperlink to the copyright holder's site.

- All community members are encouraged to actively contribute to communities and are eligible to submit content to online communities. (In most cases, content editor approval may be required prior to posting or publication.)

- Members should report inaccurate or out-of-date content to the responsible owner or content editor. This can be done easily via the "Email This Page" function inside the community space.

- Members should keep their personal contact information updated (inactive accounts without current contact information may be administratively deleted).

- Use KfD communities for their intended purpose.

    o **Do:**

        – Learn more about your community.

        – Save time by consolidating useful information.

        – Interact with peers and subject matter experts.

    o **Do not:**

        – Promote personal agendas.

        – Market commercial items.

        – Abuse email privileges. Where permission exists to send bulk email to a community, use it sparingly. Inappropriate use of email may be grounds for revoking membership.

The After-Action Review

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

An after-action review (AAR) is a professional discussion of an event, focusing on performance standards and enabling development professionals and colleagues with similar or shared interests to discover for themselves **what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses**. The AAR affords leaders, staff, and partners an opportunity to benefit from every program, activity, or task. It provides

- Candid insights into specific strengths and weaknesses from various perspectives

- Feedback and insight critical to improved performance

- Details often lacking in evaluation reports alone

The AAR is the basis for learning from our successes and failures. A good manager or leader does not learn in a vacuum: the people involved in an activity—those closest to it—are the ones best poised to identify the learning it offers.

Feedback compares the actual output of a process with the intended outcome. By focusing on the desired outcome and by describing specific observations, teams identify strengths and weaknesses, and together they decide how to improve performance. This shared learning improves team proficiency and promotes collegiality and group cohesion. Though not a cure-all for issues or problems, the review provides a starting point for improvements to future activities.

Because AAR participants actively discover what happened and why, they can learn and remember more than they would from a critique or a formal evaluation. The climate of a critique, focusing on what is wrong, often prevents candid discussion and stifles opportunities for learning and team building.

TYPES OF AARs

All AARs follow the same general format, involve the exchange of ideas and observations, and focus on improving training proficiency. Session organizers can decide whether the review will be formal or informal.

Formal AARs require more detailed planning, coordination, logistical support, supplies, and time for facilitation and report preparation. A facilitator guides the discussion, and notes are recorded on flip charts with the help of a dedicated scribe. The meeting should follow an agenda, using the four guiding questions (listed below, under Conducting the AAR) to set up the discussion. Following the session itself, a formal report is presented. Recommendations and actionable items are later brought to the attention of Agency management.

Informal AARs are usually conducted onsite immediately following an event, activity, or program. Frequently, an informal AAR is carried out by those responsible for the activity, and if necessary, the discussion leader or facilitator can either be identified beforehand or be chosen by the team itself. As with a formal AAR, the standard format and questions guide the discussion. Team or project leaders may use informal AARs as on-the-spot coaching tools while reviewing overall group or individual performance. For example, the team could quickly

- Evaluate performance against a desired standard or established performance objective

- Identify strengths and weaknesses

- Decide how to improve performance

In addition, informal reviews provide instant feedback: ideas and solutions can be immediately put to use, and the team can learn from them for future or similar applications. Providing direct feedback, just in time, is a key strength of the informal review.

PLANNING AND CARRYING OUT THE AAR

The date and time of the AAR should be identified as part of the schedule for the event. It is imperative that the AAR be integrated into the entire planning process. Carrying out the AAR entails four steps: (1) planning the

review, (2) preparing for it, (3) conducting the review, and (4) following up (applying the AAR results).

BENEFITS OF AN AAR

AARs are effective when leaders support them; when they are done immediately—by the team, for the team; and when participants agree to be honest, open, and professional. Done well, an AAR will

- Decrease repeats of mistakes or missteps

- Improve morale—everyone can make a difference for the future

- Increase chances for success in similar or related activities

- Promote open, frequent communication, sharing, and proactive identification of strengths to sustain and shortcomings to improve

CONDUCTING THE AAR

In a 90-minute meeting, the AAR should focus on four key questions:

- What did we intend to do?

- What actually happened?

- What went well, and why?

- What can be improved, and how?

At the close of the discussion, the facilitator or group leader should review and summarize key points, linking observations to recommendations for future improvement. The same person should ensure that the After-Action Report is produced, documenting the results of the AAR.

FOLLOWING UP: USING THE RESULTS

By applying what is learned in an AAR, a team can improve its future performance. The AAR is one aspect of the complete learning cycle, which includes

- **Learning before** an event, using knowledge, experience, and lessons collected in similar or related events

- **Learning during** an event, allowing room for immediately recognizing performance that is not up to standard and making on-the-spot course corrections

- **Learning after** an event, by the team that carried it out

The After-Action Report itself serves several purposes. Along with its executive summary, it provides a good reference for teams undertaking similar events or activities or producing similar products, and it may spark future policy or procedures changes. Results or recommendations from an AAR may lead to revised formal guidance and procedures or to redesigned processes and products. Leaders and managers are responsible for recommending how best to apply the report's substantive recommendations.

TEMPLATES

A sample agenda, facilitator's flip charts, and the report outline are presented below. For a complete guide to the AAR, consult USAID's manual, *The After-Action Review: Technical Guidance*, PN-ADF-360 (http://pdf. usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADF360.pdf). For coaching, facilitation, or additional support, contact the KfD team: kfd@usaid.gov.

AGENDA FOR TODAY'S REVIEW

- Welcome, introduction, and context for this review

- Ground rules and role of facilitator

- What was intended?

- What actually happened?

- What went well, and why?

- What can be improved, and how?

- The way ahead: closing comments and preparation for the report

---

GROUND RULES FOR TODAY

- Active participation

- Equal representation (of ideas and perspectives)

- Creativity

- Openness to new ideas

- Critical thinking (about the topic or idea)

- "Yes … and"

- Consensus where possible

- Commitment to carry the results forward

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

- Keep group on task and on time

- Encourage participation by all

- Create an environment that supports expression of new ideas, original thinking, and recommended changes or solutions

- Introduce the way ahead

SAMPLE AFTER-ACTION REPORT OUTLINE FOR AN EVENT
Name of Event, Date of AAR

Background: A short summary (1–2 paragraphs) of what the event was and how it occurred.

What did we intend to do? Brief summary based on discussion during AAR.

What actually happened? Brief description based on discussion during AAR.

What went well, and why? Summary of the planning process/steps, to be replicated for future events. Present each item and its related discussion as a separate paragraph—"Item: Discussion." Repeat as needed.

What to improve, and how? Details of items to improve in planning future events, based on discussions during the AAR. Present each issue and its related discussion as a separate paragraph—"Issue: Discussion, Recommendation."
   Issue: Concise description of what to improve
   Discussion: Details—what happened and its impact
   Recommendation: A clear recommendation for ensuring that this issue is mitigated or eliminated when planning for a similar event

Unexpected Results: Optional—if unintended results should be highlighted, place them here. Present each such result in a brief discussion (1–2 sentences).

Conclusion: Include one to two paragraphs summarizing the event planning, the success or failure of the event, and expected next steps.

Appendix A: Names of AAR participants

Annexes:

•   Budget information (cost to conduct event)

•   Planning calendar/key milestones

•   Facility information and contact persons

•   Special equipment list

•   Templates used

•   Anything you wish you'd had or known when you started planning

Basic Facilitation Tips: Face-To-Face Meetings

The role of the facilitator is to foster and facilitate team interaction; energize and motivate a community; and orchestrate and support activities focused on either people or processes, including creation of products.

As facilitator, you should establish a climate for effective collaboration; guide the event or activity; and help the group identify the way ahead via decisions taken, actions needed, products that were created, and next steps. Your physical presentation and presence show that you are interested, paying attention, building rapport, collecting information, and valuing individual contributions and concerns. Key facilitation steps, behaviors, and tricks include:

1. SETTING THE SCENE

Define the agenda: set realistic time limits and adhere to them. Establish objectives/outcomes:

- What would success look like?

- What would have been accomplished?

- Problems solved, decisions made?

- Any other learning and sharing?

Agree on ground rules, to build trust and confidence, empower the team (or participants), maintain effective relationships, reinforce communications, help ensure optimum performance, and help sustain morale. Good ground rules encourage discussion and meetings that are characterized by

- Active participation

- Equal representation (of ideas and perspectives)

- Creativity

- Openness to new ideas

- Critical thinking (about the topic or idea)

- Use of "yes … and" (versus "yes … but," which shuts down conversation)

- Consensus where possible

- Commitment to carrying the results forward

2. GETTING STARTED
Open the session by

- Welcoming everyone

- Starting off participant introductions

- Setting out expectations (sometimes can be combined with introductions)

- Explaining ground rules and the role of facilitator

- Posting the agenda

- Listing the overall objectives/outcomes (and products)

3. OBSERVING GROUP DYNAMICS AND PROCESS
When facilitating, you should keep an eye on the overall process and on the participants' individual and group dynamics. This constant "attending" helps you assess how the discussion is going, make decisions (continue as planned, modify accordingly?), and push toward the expected outcomes. In addition to the verbal, overt things to observe, other cues include

- Facial expressions—as culturally appropriate (are they with you, engaged, confused?)

- Body language—as culturally appropriate (are they with you, engaged, confused?)

4. ACTIVE LISTENING

A facilitator should model active listening. To do this, you should

- Talk less, listen more (pay attention)

- Not interrupt

- Resist finishing the speaker's sentences

- Not let biases or distractions interfere

- Watch and use body language to support what's being said (nod your head, make eye contact, etc., as culturally appropriate)

It is important to give complete attention to the speaker, so the message doesn't get lost or distorted. Major roadblocks for any active listener:

- Internal distractions—competing thoughts, which may be related to what's being said OR mental excursions to unrelated topics

- External distractions—sights or sounds in the meeting environment that compete with what the speaker is saying

On the verbal front, when the speaker stops, you can

- Paraphrase (summarize or verify what was said)

- Reflect underlying feelings (empathize)

- Ask questions (open-ended, clarifying, constructive, culturally appropriate)

- Use appropriate nonverbal cues (make eye contact, nod, lean toward the speaker, keep still)

5. FACILITATION SKILLS: ASKING QUESTIONS

Facilitators ask questions to

- Prove a point

- Clarify something

- Encourage other points of view

- Stimulate the thinking of the group ("What experiences have you had with this?")

- Elicit input from individuals or subject matter experts ("Anthony, you've had a lot of experience in collecting portfolio data from field missions. What would you recommend?")

- Summarize discussion results, decisions, or divergent ideas or opinions

There are two types of questions, each with its own use:

- **Closed questions** shut down discussion. Usually, they are framed as "yes/no" or "either/or," and they begin with the words "is," "can," "how many," or "does."

- **Open questions** elicit discussion and stimulate thinking, taking the participants beyond mere "yes" or "no" replies. These questions usually begin with the words "what," "how," "when," "where," or "why."

Of course, you may gather additional information through separate questionnaires, surveys, and data collection forms. These can be either personalized (administered to an individual) or generalized (to a group organized according to operating unit, topic/subject focus, or region).

6. FACILITATIVE BEHAVIORS AND TRICKS

To keep your facilitation effective and hold the group's attention, try to mix and match different approaches, continuing to be engaged so that you can effectively enlist interest and input from the participants. These tricks work well:

- Maintain/regain focus

- Use the group memory

- Encourage

- Enforce process agreements

- Say what's going on

- "Play dumb"

- Use your body language

- Suggest a process

- Boomerang (send a question or ideas back to the group)

- Check for agreement

7. RECORDING

Use flip charts to capture group memory, giving visual access to

- What was said

- Decisions, agreements

- Outcomes, products, new ideas

- Unresolved issues or problems

- Next steps, action items

Flip charts or other visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint presentation slides or handouts) should be used to communicate more clearly about:

- The agenda, objectives, outcomes

- Ground rules, process norms, role of facilitator

- Key presentation points

- Instructions for small-group exercises

Pointers for more effective flip charting:

- Write BIG—use flat edge of marker

- Use words sparingly—major points, key phrases

- Capture the essence of what's said

- After charting, read the words back to the group

- When preparing charts before a session, use different colors to write and highlight

- No more than three colors per page

- Avoid light-colored markers (red, yellow, pink, orange)

- Be creative—arrows, boxes, figures

- Keep task instructions displayed on a chart throughout the task (for easy reference)

- Don't hide behind the flipchart stand

8. IDENTIFYING THE WAY AHEAD

Close the session, meeting, event, activity, or workshop by

- Summarizing solutions

- Checking for obstacles

- Planning next steps: what, by whom, by when, how to check

- Discussing additional support or input needed

- Getting feedback (on the meeting and the process)

- Setting the course for the way ahead

For support, coaching, or facilitation for your community events or meetings, contact KfD@usaid.gov. In addition, USAID will be offering training in facilitation skills.

Basic Facilitation Tips: Virtual Meetings

Setting the scene and tone for virtual dialogue includes many of the same elements as for face-to-face facilitation. However, the interaction dynamics can be different because

- The expected physical cues are not there (body language, speaking style, inflections, pacing, tone of voice)

- Much online interaction is asynchronous: delay between responses can be positive (allows more time to think, consider what to say, get more information, include more detail) or not (emotions can build up)

- Interactions are somewhat anonymous: even if participants know each other, lack of physical proximity sometimes causes inhibitions and norms to break down

- Conversations are text-based or at least two-dimensional: they rely on clear writing and agile conversations; however, with increased bandwidth and a broader suite of tools, graphics, sound, and multimedia can be brought in

Some tips for virtual facilitation follow.

Online Facilitation Skills: General

- Assume good intent; remind others of this

- Model the appropriate behavior for the group

- Build trust by doing what you say you will do

- Be explicit in your communication

- Think before you send

Setting the Scene: Getting Started

- Make rules, norms, and expectations consistent and clear

- Provide orientation materials and collaboration space for all participants

- Provide guidance on "what goes where"

- Encourage posting and visiting personal profiles to build relationships

Process Facilitation: Attending

- Continue to provide orientation materials and collaboration space for all participants

- Provide guidance on "what goes where"

- Encourage using personal profiles to build relationships

- Acknowledge participation

- Respond to first-time participants

Question Asking

- Encourage participation

    o   Open-ended questions

    o   Clarifying questions

    o   Constructive questions

- Reply to comments that get no other recognition

- Draw out quiet members

- Give feedback

Process Facilitation: Keeping on Track and on Task

- Send private emails to individuals, to stimulate input

- Email "missing" people and invite them back

- Nurture others to help facilitate or host discussions

- Encourage mentoring

- Let others know if you will be offline

Process Facilitation: Ensuring Quality

- Ask members for feedback:

    o   What's working? What's missing?

    o   Recommended changes?

- Respect copyright and confidentiality

- Don't add fuel to difficult situations

- Don't assume no response means dissent or assent—seek explicit responses

For Task-Oriented Groups

- State the purpose/task clearly

- Post timelines/reminders regularly

- Set up clear/visible roles and responsibilities

- Use email for notification, as needed

- Summarize often, to make conversation or discussion nuggets accessible

- Monitor activity/gauge participation; facilitate as needed

- If activity levels drop, evaluate against reasons for participation

- Encourage divergent processes; channel convergent ones

Dealing with Structure and Content

- Provide links, resources, and relevant content to foster interaction

- Label topic and discussion items

- Frame topic openers clearly; demonstrate goal of topic or discussion

- Take into account participation from different time zones

- Explore use of color and images (for impact, clarity)

- Hold "conversations" in logical spots—social in social spaces; content/action elsewhere by topic

- Look for participation patterns and changes

- Open new topics as needed

- Close old topics as they grow dormant

- Set up time-delimited events or topics to foster activity

- Keep online space free from extraneous or unrelated content

- Break posts into paragraphs, bullets, or multiple posts

Recording: What to Keep

- Key results from discussions; notes, major points, decisions, actions from events

- Other "knowledge nuggets"

- Lessons learned

- Task or activity results or products

- Things to "brag on" (for outreach/communications purposes)

- Issues for other communities

- Archived materials/content

These tips were inspired by discussion materials collected by Full Circle Associates, presented in more detail on their site, www.fullcirc.com.

Basic Facilitation Tips: Managing Conflict in Community

Bringing diverse groups of people together, whether face-to-face or in a virtual community, comes with inevitable moments of conflict and misunderstanding. These tips—for community leaders, facilitators, and members—should mitigate or head off most sticky situations. Contact the KfD team (kfd@usaid.gov) for additional advice, training, support, or facilitation coaching.

Key:
L = Take primary leadership
M = Manage
P = Participate

Tip	Leader	Facilitator	Member
Develop guiding principles, norms, rules of engagement for community	M	L	P
Set ground rules and tone for discussion and collaboration in new events/ activities	M	L	P
Understand the talents, limitations, and boundaries of community members	P	L	P
Clarify, restate, listen actively	P	L	P
Mediate when needed	P	L	P
Summarize (often)	P	L	P

Tip	Leader	Facilitator	Member
Go offline (out of collaboration space) when needed	P	L	P
Close discussions when appropriate/when time	M	L	P
Give feedback	M	L	P
Examine the behavior	P	L	P
Keep things in perspective	M	L	P
Make "I" statements	P	L	P
Check and double-check assumptions	M	L	P
Acknowledge perspectives/ respect differences	M	L	P
Communicate clearly/ thoughtfully	M	L	P
Put yourself in others' shoes	M	L	P
Assume others mean well	M	L	P
Discourage "gotchas" and point-by-point defenses	M	L	P
Choose when to respond	M	L	P
Use email or phone to resolve problems, unless larger group is involved	M	L	P

Change Management Basics

Change is one constant that we can count on. For some individuals, change is exciting and almost addictive; others find it perplexing, confusing, and stressful. Working in communities supports a positive shift in **institutional culture** that is integral to USAID's Knowledge for Development program.

Here are a few pointers that will help support you, your community, and your leadership as you navigate and guide colleagues through a number of important changes in the way USAID does its business.

- To identify the barriers and enabling strengths in your culture, focus on the context of the business issue and strategy your approach is supporting and the day-to-day work of your community as it relates to USAID's mission.

- Every organization relies on both the official hierarchy as shown on the organizational charts and the unseen associations between members of networks and communities.

- Middle managers have much influence. Coach, court, and involve them.

- Realigning the current reward and recognition system to support the values and beliefs needed for knowledge sharing may be too much to tackle at first. However, you can create additional rewards and recognition.

- Create new heroes and tell stories about them.

- Change can be described as a three-part process: the future state, the current state, and the transition state. Determine how to manage each of these parts.

- Develop an activity plan for the transition state.

- Assess the expected magnitude of the potential change and how many people will be affected by it.

- Identify your potential stakeholders and analyze how they feel about the change.

- Early in the change process, provide training on any new skills, behaviors, and attitudes they need. Reinforce this with additional training events, materials, and support along the way.

- Integrate your change management efforts into your communications and outreach to convey a consistent message and raise visibility.

Communications and Outreach

METHODS FOR SPREADING A COMMUNITY'S MESSAGE

The Knowledge for Development Core Team uses a variety of methods to communicate with its key audiences. Here are some ways that you can work with the team to spread the message about your community:

- **Community for Community (C4C) Events:** C4C events provide an excellent opportunity to publicize your community, meet with other community leaders, and share experiences. Contact kfd@usaid.gov for information about upcoming C4C events.

- **One-Pagers:** Produced electronically or as handouts, one-pagers convey a concise message about your community. This will provide explanations of the people and tools aspects of communities, complementing your own outreach materials. In addition, KfD offers general information about USAID's program and its related knowledge-sharing tools.

- **Internet Website Posting:** Highlight your community's activities and achievements on the KfD website (knowledge.usaid.gov). Contact kfd@usaid.gov for more information.

- **KfD Knowledge Coordinators (KCs):** As the central KfD point of contact at the mission level, these KCs can assist in pushing your community's message out to the field.

- **KfD Outreach and Interaction (O&I) Working Group:** This group can provide additional help with marketing your community across the Agency or connecting its work to activities across the extended enterprise.

OTHER WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR COMMUNITY'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Complementing the above KfD-related distribution channels, your community may employ other approaches to communications. Some of these can take place outside the community space. KfD encourages you to consider how to leverage these to draw attention to your community, attract new members, or highlight its ongoing work.

- **Regular meetings:** Publicize when, where, and for what purpose your community meets. These could be in-person meetings, conference calls, etc.

- **Special events:** List any events that your community participates in or sponsors.

- **Newsletters:** In your community space, list the publisher and distributor of any related newsletters, along with subscription requirements.

- **Articles:** Determine which outside papers, newsletters, or magazines could be contacted about publishing an informational article about your community, its members, or some of its activities.

- **Community Announcements:** Your community leader or sponsor can schedule periodic announcements and reminders to your community to facilitate the adoption of the community space. The most efficient delivery format is email.

- **Community Front Page:** Set out the purpose of your community, displaying it on your front page so that newcomers will know what to expect.

- **Email Signature:** Adding your community URL to your email signature is an easy, low-cost way to promote your community to others.

Tools and Technical Support Guidance

WHAT IS COMMUNITIES@USAID ONLINE?

For existing Agency communities with a need to collaborate virtually, the Knowledge for Development and Web Services teams offer Communities @ USAID on the USAID Alliance Network (http://ecco.usaidallnet.gov). This online space provides communities with

• Agency standard online collaboration space

• Easy-to-read discussion forums

• Customizable knowledge content-types for relevant description and classification of your community's knowledge

• Accessibility to the extended enterprise

• And more

Contact the KfD team (KfD@usaid.gov) to find out how the Communities@USAID Online space may complement your existing community.

GETTING STARTED WITH COMMUNITIES @ USAID ONLINE

The following is provided as a quick reference guide for communities hosted by Communities@USAID Online. Contact the KfD Team (KfD@usaid.gov) for additional training information.

Logging in…

1. Point your browser to http://ecco.usaidallnet.gov

2. Click on "Sign In" in top left of the Communities@USAID page.

3. In the popup window, enter your full USAID email address (including "@usaid.gov") and the password that you either created or had assigned to you.

Navigating to a community…

1. Communities are displayed in two locations: (1) the Community Explorer box on the left of the page, which has communities listed in a tree view, and (2) the Our Communities section near the bottom, which has a complete list of communities.

2. After finding your community in either the section called "Community Explorer" or the "Our Communities" section, click on its name.

Starting a new discussion…

1. Navigate to the community or topic where you would like to start a discussion.

2. On the left side of the page in the Participate box, if you are a member of the community, you should see a link labeled "Contribute."

3. Click on "Contribute," then on "Start a Discussion" in the popup menu.

4. You should see a popup window with three fields (the first two are required):

    a. **Subject:** enter the subject of the discussion you are starting.

    b. **Body:** this is where you enter the text of your post.

    c. **Attachment:** optional field for attaching files. Click "Browse" button to locate file you want to attach.

Having finished filling out the fields, click "Submit."

Replying to a discussion…

1. Navigate to the community or topic where the discussion exists that you want to reply to.
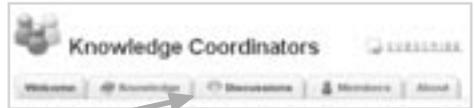
2. To view all discussions in a topic or community, click the Discussions tab.

3. On the Discussions tab, click on the discussion to which you would like to reply (click on the subject of the discussion).

4. You should now see the discussion thread. To reply to any particular post in the discussion, click "Reply" under the post to which you want to reply.

5. Having clicked "Reply," you should see a small reply window appear below the post that you are replying to. After typing your reply, click on "Submit."

Contributing/suggesting a contribution…

A contribution can be one of many types, such as a document or website link useful to a community.

1. Navigate to the community or topic where you would like to make the contribution.

2. On the left side of the page in the Participate box, if you are a member of the community, you should see a link labeled "Contribute."

3. Click on "Contribute" and then on "Suggest a Contribution" or "Add a Contribution" depending on your rights in the community.
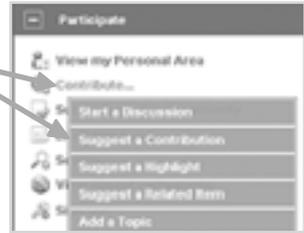
4. You will then see a popup with a list of contribution types. Click on the one that best fits the contribution you are adding, and then click "Next."

5. A new popup should then appear with several fields to allow you to describe the contribution you are adding (the first two are required):

    a. **Name**: enter a name for the contribution you are adding.

    b. **Benefit/Value**: enter a brief description of why this contribution is useful to the community.

    c. **Image**: optional field for attaching images (.jpg or .gif). Click "Browse" button to locate the image you want to submit.

    d. **File**: optional field for attaching files. Click "Browse" button to locate the file you want to attach.

    e. **Website Address**: optional field for adding a website address that you want to add as a contribution.

6. At any point you can save your contribution without posting it to the community by clicking "Save to Drafts." Contributions that have been saved to drafts are accessible in your personal area.
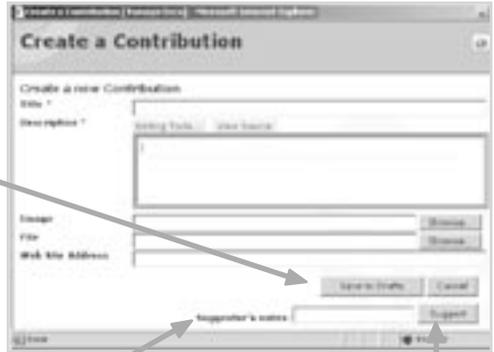
7. If you have rights to only suggest content, there will be a field at the bottom labeled "Suggester's Notes." Any context added here will assist the Community Leader in approving and placing your suggestion.

8. Having filled in all required and any relevant forms, when you are ready to submit your contribution click "Suggest."

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

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American Productivity and Quality Center. 2004. *Building and Sustaining Communities of Practice (Connected Learning)*. Houston: APQC.

RESOURCE LISTS
Full Circle Associates (Nancy White). Resources on online communities and CoPs. www.fullcirc.com/community/communitymanual.htm

Open Directory list of CoP resources. http://dmoz.org/Reference/ Knowledge_Management/Knowledge_Flow/Communities_of_Practice

ONLINE FORUMS AND COMMUNITIES
Com-Prac. An online forum for practitioners involved in CoPs. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/com-prac

Cpsquare. The community of practice for CoPs. www.cpsquare.org

Online Facilitation. An e-discussion list focusing on skills, techniques, and issues of facilitation in a variety of online environments. http://tech.groups. yahoo.com/group/onlinefacilitation

WEBLINKS
Benchmarks for Building Online Communities. Benton Foundation guidelines to help foundations and nonprofits plan, build, and sustain online communities. www.benton.org/publibrary/capacity/extranet_ benchmarks.doc

Building Electronic Communities and Networks. IMARK self-training module covering the approaches, methods, and tools used to build and facilitate online communities; includes step-by-step procedures (also on CD-Rom). www.imarkgroup.org/moduledescrC_en.asp

Facilitating a Community of Practice. Bellanet training module designed to help learners understand CoPs and the role of the facilitator, then learn how to set up and facilitate an online CoP. Includes developing an action plan for facilitating a CoP. www.bellanet.org/itrain/materials_en.cfm

Virtual Communities of Practice: Design for Collaboration and Knowledge Creation. A Canadian government paper focusing on design functionality, collaborative tools, and practices that support member participation and knowledge sharing. http://iit-iti.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/iit-publications-iti/docs/NRC-47157.pdf

U.S. Agency for International Development

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