COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AS A FOUNDATION STRATEGY

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What is a *Community of Practice*?

"Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"

http://www.wenger.com/theory/index.htm

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3 Legs of the Community of Practice Stool

- Shared concern or passion among participants
- Shared practice around the shared concern / passion
- Community approach to learning *from* and *with* each other in order to improve one's own practice around the shared concern / passion

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LUMINA'S BIG GOAL

To increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025

GO AL 2025

Read more:
http://LuminaFoundation.org/Goal_2025/

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Higher Education Productivity

- State productivity work began in 2009
- State teams typically: state higher education system, governor's office and legislators
- 3 Strategies:
  - Identifying and supporting effective practices
  - Advocating for public policy
  - Building public will for change

Slide 1

Learning Community Strategy (LCS) Evaluation Questions

- What is the value or worth of Lumina's learning community strategy (LCS) for individual and organizational participants and for the higher education productivity work?

- To understand:
  - Whether and how to embed learning communities in subsequent work
  - Best practices for systems, structures, and support to strengthen the impact of learning from grant-making efforts
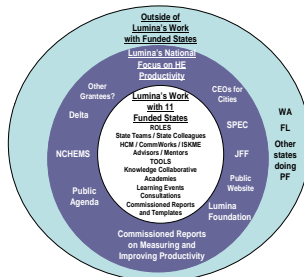 - How Lumina might increase the capability of the current LCS to move higher education productivity forward

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Table 1: Roles, Rules & Tools of Lumina's Higher Education Productivity LCS

Learning Tools	Rules	Roles
•KC Web Portal •KC Archives •Academies •Advisor & Mentor Consultations •Learning Events •Commissioned Reports •Commissioned Tools	•Access •Contributing •Developing / Maintaining •Member Expectations	•Developer or facilitator of shared processes & tools •Manager & ongoing support for information flow •Receiver of information & knowledge •Sharer of information & knowledge •Generator of knowledge •Practitioner of knowledge-based practices •Developer of collaborative community for learning

Context: Factors influencing development and participation in the LCS

- Individual capacities, e.g., expertise, experience & commitment of LCS developers & users
- Inter-relationships, e.g., between members; history of working together
- Institutional, e.g., Lumina productivity agenda & leadership; LCS funding/resources
- Environmental, e.g., HE culture; state political cultures

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Figure 1
Members of Lumina's Higher Education Productivity LCS
During the Learning Year

Slide 4

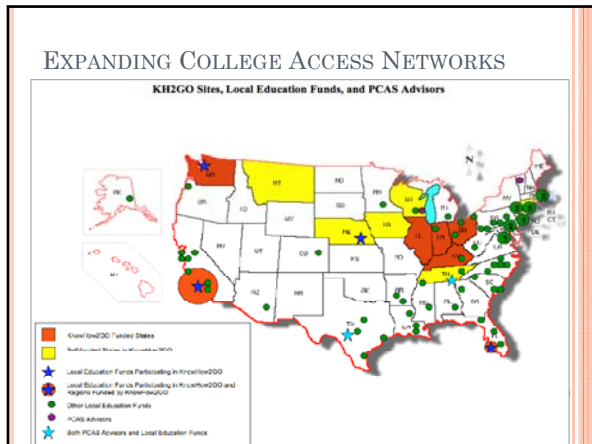**Table 2: Learning from the Practice of Others**

Outcome: Changing Practice

Health Canada / Wenger: Practitioners develop own public involvement practice capacity via, e.g., evaluation, skill development learning strategy, and website tools workgroups

Ayuda Urbana / Wenger: Urban specialist users develop, manage and distribute knowledge for own practice. Improvement in technical expertise and municipal effectiveness reported as well as sense of common problems and regional identify.

Clarica / Wenger: Widely dispersed independent agents working with a life insurance company develop and share their personal, professional and technical expertise. Agents report opportunities to grow personally, professionally and technically as well as to develop new collegial relationships, obtain new information, ideas, approaches and strategies, and get clarification on issues.

DaimlerChrysler / Wenger: Engineers in Tech Clubs are responsible for many knowledge-based activities, e.g., documenting lessons learned, standardizing practices, initiating newcomers and exploring technologies with suppliers.

•http://www.ewenger.com/pub/index.htm

Outcome: Developing and / or Implementing Policy

Michigan / IDEA: Integration of Title 1 and IDEA education systems in Michigan.

Pennsylvania / IDEA: CoP on Transition partner agencies support high level transition policy related to service delivery to those transitioning from school to adult services with policy actions and guidance to their own field staff plus pilot programs.

New Hampshire / IDEA: CoPs across education, mental health and family organizations lead state to develop a family-led literacy initiative and to support it through the national Professional Development / Adult Learning CoP.

•Cashman, J., Linehan, P., and Rosser, M. (2007). *Communities of Practice: A new approach to solving complex educational problems.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

Outcome: Creating Capacity for Sustainability

Hawaii / IDEA: State's assumption of responsibility for youth behavioral health outcomes from federal monitors sustained.

•See Cashman, et al above.

Outcome: Creating Conditions for "Game Changing"

Shifting the culture to one of working collaboratively appears throughout these successful CoPs. Using a CoP approach provides participants an opportunity to experience modeling of working together successfully.

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Table 3: Observations from the Practice of Others about How Successful CoPs work

Formal / informal rules and norms guiding the development and maintenance of the learning community

Communities of practice are driven by social energy created by a shared concern. Identification of a shared concern is important for the initial development of a CoP and provides the underlying supportive context for maintaining a successful community.

Part of developing a community approach to learning is for the members of the community to take a significant role in determining their knowledge needs and how the community desires to work together.

Formal / informal rules and norms guiding member participation

Lack of trust between community members is likely to inhibit the extent to which people are willing to share knowledge.

Roles

Leadership at many levels within the CoP is important to making learning community partnerships work, e.g., being a champion for participation, engaging personally, being a steward of the community and/or its technology needs.

Tools that support the work of the community

Story-telling is important for sharing knowledge to move practice ahead and for confirming to those within a CoP and those outside the community that learning is occurring.

Evaluation: Assessing the development of a community and communicating about the status of this development to the participants in it is important to improving and maintaining the community.

Context: Conditions into which the community is inserted

Many communities fail, not because members lose interest, but because nobody has the energy and time to take care of logistics and to make a space for inquiry.

Being understood as an integral part of an organization's business strategy can be an important factor for success of a CoP.

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- Launched in 2007 collaboratively by the Ad Council, American Council on Education and the Lumina Foundation for Education.

- 2 Components:
  - Media campaign
  - Ground campaign

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KH2GO Sites, Local Education Funds, and PCAS Advisors

Legend:
- KnowHow2GO Funded States
- Participating States in KnowHow2GO
- Local Education Funds Participating in KnowHow2GO
- Local Education Funds Participating in KnowHow2GO and Regions Funded by KnowHow2GO
- Other Local Education Funds
- PCAS Advisors
- Both PCAS Advisors and Local Education Funds

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS WITHIN THE REALIST EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

o What……
- were the salient features of the CoP?
- resources, processes, and procedures contributed to implementation?
- institutional and environmental factors influenced implementation?
- were the key intra-personal, inter-organizational, and intra-organizational outcomes?

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KH2GO CoP'S SALIENT FEATURES

- Role of CoP in initiative
- Resources
  - National partner to lead
  - Lumina staff time
  - Funding
- Structure
  - Meetings
  - Online social network

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FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION

- Changes in the initiative
  - Programmatic change
  - Additional partners
- Size and composition of community
  - Rotating participation
- Expected outcomes
  - Objective outcomes
  - Consistent understanding of goals

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PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- Communication
  - Among national partners
  - With state partners
- Meeting format
  - Top-down
  - Changes to planning system
- Other learning activities
  - Webinars and calls
  - Technical assistance
  - Online social media site

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+ Perceptions of improved work, state networks, engagement in policy arena

- Participation not marked by voluntary, participant-directed learning

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- •Need for a clear communication plan and feedback loop to foundation
- •Flexible CoP to support grantees' efforts to lead their own learning
- •CoP facilitators must understand and support CoP goals
- •CoP roles
- •Connections between face-to-face and online communities – appropriate tools, additional features (e.g., IM capabilities)
- •Planning for sustainability
- •Planning for evaluation at the start

Thanks from KnowHow2GO and Algebra II!!

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOUNDATIONS

- Role of learning network within the initiative
- Clear outcomes connected to the goals of the initiative
- Role of the Foundation in supporting/facilitating CoP
- Participants leading own learning
- Measurement system to assess progress
- More openness among foundations to share research/findings related to CoPs to inform the field.

RELEVANCE FOR EVALUATION PRACTICE

- Examining the *domain of concern* of communities of practice
- Evaluating the value of changing *practice*
- Applying a *community approach for learning* from and with each other to improve our own practice, how to learn from our evaluation colleagues.

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