

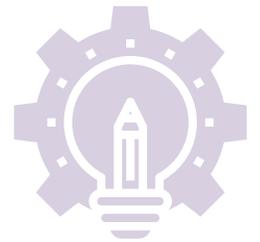
Communities of Practice

Communities of practice are facilitated groups who gather together to discuss particular topics with a goal of creating positive change. Communities of practice may be formal or informal, and may form after a training or based on a shared desire to explore a topic.

A community of practice is a multi-session, facilitated conversation among members of a particular group with a goal of creating positive change related to an area of common interest

Select the Topic and Purpose

Communities of practice are formed to explore a topic the group wants to learn more about, or to dig into an issue the group wants to try to solve. The topic should be connected to a purpose or positive change - groups should define what is the end they hope will result from this community of practice.



Identify the Community

Some communities of practice form within already established groups such as a Vermont Early Childhood Network or a Director Network. Other communities of practice form around a particular topic of interest or a community challenge. Groups should identify who will be invited to participate in this community of practice.



Describe the Resources and Activities

As you prepare to launch your community of practice, you should identify what resources and materials you'll need to be successful. This may include kickoff trainings, data detailing a particular challenge, examples of best practices, guest speakers, links to resources, etc. You should also describe the types of resources and materials you will use during the community of practice to support learning and growth, and the types of end product materials your community of practice will create



Hire a Facilitator

Effective communities of practice use a paid facilitator to guide conversations about the topic and gather materials used in the sessions. Facilitators have knowledge and experience facilitating conversations and ideally will have strong knowledge of the topic area of the community of practice. Northern Lights can provide resources to help guide effective community of practice facilitation - contact your Resource Advisor for support.

Example 1: Exploring a Shared Interest

Topic: Exploring Implementation of Practice-Based Coaching



Purpose: To help member programs decide whether or not they wish to pursue implementation of Practice-Based Coaching in their programs

Community: Invite individuals who work in programs that are considering implementation of Practice-Based Coaching



Resources + Activities:

- Hold a kickoff training on Practice-Based Coaching and provide everyone with a list of links to learn more
- Gather resources in a shared virtual location. Generate pros / cons and current challenges lists to share with others.
- Make created resources available to other educators who are considering implementation of Practice-Based Coaching



Example 2: Developing Best Practices

Topic: Exploring best practices for working with mixed age groups



Purpose: To create a resource guide of best practices to share with new Family Child Care programs and professionals

Community: Invite any interested Family Child Care professionals



Resources + Activities:

- Invite some high quality Family Child Care professionals to share advice as part of an expert panel
- Gather resources in a shared virtual location. Add links to examples, public videos, and tools.
- Make created resources available to new Family Child Care programs and professionals



Example 3: Solving a Community Challenge

Topic: Addressing community challenges related to staff retention



Purpose: To improve teacher retention at programs within a particular community

Community: Individuals working in or with deep knowledge of a particular geographic region



Resources + Activities:

- Share data detailing the challenges experienced in the region
- Gather resources and generate possible solutions. Vet these ideas with thought leaders and continue refining ideas.
- Make final list of possible solutions and suggestions for where to start available to the whole community

