

Project ID No.	CP 11 / 4 / 1 / 07
GOAL	4 SUB-PROGRAM

## Effective Networking Communities of Practice

Action plans must be submitted online to [www.reframingthefuture.net](http://www.reframingthefuture.net) by COB Tuesday 5 June 2007.

Please select "Submit a Form" on the Home Page Menu and follow the prompts.

All sections must be completed.

Please note: sections 1 – 9 of this document will be uploaded onto the Reframing the Future website. Details of participants in item 11 will be only be used in accordance with our privacy policy and will not be published on the website.

### Name of organisation funded by Reframing the Future

Kath Dickson Institute of Early Childhood Studies
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**3. Project overview** (100 words maximum)

What outcomes do you hope to achieve in your project?

The proposed CoP:

- Aims to develop members' capabilities and build, share and exchange knowledge in the area of RPL in the Community Services & Health training sector, based primarily in Toowoomba and the Darling Downs.
- Will focus on exploration, adoption and trialling of a model/s of RPL that is reported to be highly successful in the Community Services & Health sector; as well as critique of existing practice/models;
- RPL practices/ issues will be explored as part of a wider Inquiry into Making Professional Judgements in VET.

**4. Domain of knowledge**

What aspects of the national training system will be addressed by your project?

(e.g. establishing relationships with industry clients; improving workplace assessment or delivery; implementing new Training Packages)

**The Domain of Knowledge will focus on RPL models/practices in the wider context of Making Professional Judgment in VET; leading to improved training delivery and improved experiences/access for employees/organisations undertaking vocational training.**

**5. Facilitating your community of practice**

Please describe how you propose to facilitate your group progressing through the stages of growth of a Community of Practice (see Table 4.1 in the report: *The Potential for Communities of Practice to underpin the National Training Framework*):

In the time frame for this project the following is hoped to be achieved:

**Potential Stage:**

When (Early stage) communities are first forming, face-to-face meetings and real-time interaction are critical to building the bonds that help connect community members. Communities need time for members to develop trust-based relationships. Opportunities will be created for members to meet with each other f-2-f and by the use of an email list and the online discussion forum; members will be invited to engage in dialogue around particular issues and then moving on to practices.

An initial workshop will be used to create interest in the Knowledge Domain leading to participants wanting to explore the issues further as part of a CoP.

Measures of value at this stage focus on helping members develop relationships and help each another solve problems. A meeting scheduled to follow the initial workshop to launch the CoP project will be held not long after so that issues and energy around the knowledge domain will be fresh.

**Coalescing Stage:**

Finding the "rhythm" of the community will be a key focus in this stage.

This will require a lot of behind the scenes work and encouragement to make use of the online facility for the purpose of dialoguing with each other and forming groups around issues of interest. A F-2-f session is planned to again get people talking re the issues and practice. Use of guest speaker to create further interest in pursuing issues outside of comfort zone which can bring about new practices and thinking.

The facilitator will approach keen and energetic members to take on community leadership roles; members who can keep dialogue rolling, bring practice group members together informally and drive the development of tasks, actions etc. in between more formal sessions.

Domain inquiry leading to formation of Practice groups will be the primary action for this stage; getting issues on the table and then having people form groups around issues and tasks of interest to them.

**Active Stage:**

This stage will focus on Practice groups and how members are learning and what they are learning about.

As communities mature, there may reasonably be a shift in the practice domain. Members will find value in documenting best practices that can be shared across the groups leading to further inquiry. Active, healthy

communities may also begin to step up to ownership of a domain of knowledge. For example, a practice group may decide to take ownership of a process to test an RPL model based on new ideas focused on that domain.

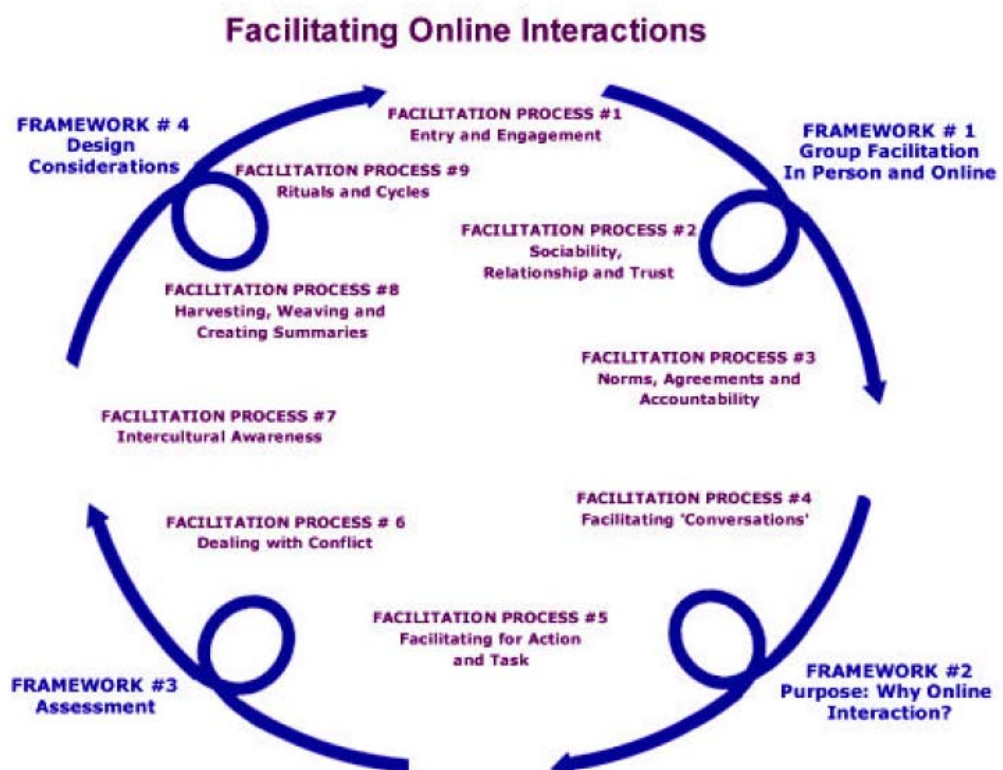
Healthy, mature communities should also be looking for new members and building relationships with other communities. The facilitator will take on the role of resourcer – putting Practice Groups in touch with identified content ‘experts’ who can add value and inform the inquiry.

Facilitating electronic communication and collaboration:

The following model from Nancy White, Full Circle Associates, provides a reminder of the stages in facilitating online interaction which aligns with the stages in Communities of Practice development. In my experience, VET practitioners in the CS&H sector have variable skills in utilising a virtual mechanism for dialogue, collaboration and learning (noting that each of these requires particular conative capacities to know the difference). If the aim is to use the online environment to build the community (dialogue) and then move into Practice Groups which will actively seek to produce, document and share tools, texts etc (collaboration & learning); then high level facilitation skills will be required to achieve the aims.

This model highlights the role the facilitator plays, particularly in firstly building a safe and inviting space in which to work and then later harvesting, weaving and creating summaries- connecting the groups.

The Kath Dickson IT specialist will be involved in setting up and the technology for this component of the CoP.



## 6. Structuring your community

Please describe how you propose to support the development of the three components of your community: its domain of knowledge, community and practice (see *Effectively Structuring Communities of Practice in VET*):

**Domain of knowledge:** Initial forum will act as a catalyst for developing interest around the domain of RPL. Facilitator to provide further think pieces, articles, case studies etc that promote further interest and passion for the issue. Encourage members to do the same. At times, guest speakers will be sourced to provide further input into the knowledge domain, when issues and queries arise.

**Community:** Facilitator to initially identify potential participating organisations which focus on delivery of Community Services & Health training, employing organisations in the industry sectors which use this training package and other stakeholders who can inform the practice of RPL (eg Industry Training Council, DETA audit staff; DETA RPL project staff). Facilitator to encourage members to use electronic forms of communication to continue dialogue in between f-2-f sessions. A web forum mechanism has been set up by KDIECS for this purpose.

**Practice:** Facilitator to take on Boundary spanning role – moving between Practice groups , helping build the practice including the knowledge base, collecting and publishing lessons learned, practices shared, tools and

methods developed; working behind the scenes to link groups and manage the boundaries between the community and the formal organisation. Emerging passion and leadership to be harnessed from the members to keep the practice groups 'ticking on'.

**7. Anticipated outcomes** (see Chapters 6-7 of *The Potential*)

Please describe the outcomes anticipated as a result of your project:

for participating individuals	Build and validate the core of the professional – transform practice through understanding how RPL practices and Making Professional Judgment underpins professional practice in the VET system;
for participating organisations	Cultivate communities of judgment where VET professionals can share and build knowledge in relation to standards in the industry – leading to consistency and quality in RPL and teaching/learning/assessment;  The supporting of the development of partnerships between RTOs, industry and enterprises through the exploration and implementation of a recognition model that is acceptable, workable and less complex and credible and provides a maximum return for both the individual worker/candidate and the enterprise/industry;

**8. Promotion**

Please outline how your project's processes and products will be promoted:

within your organisation(s)	Through staff meetings and regular staff updates;
to industry and other relevant organisations	Through KDIECS/other RTO documents, policies, marketing material; training relationships with employers; via the website set up for the project;
to the broader VET sector	Utilise the local Training Reference Group (DETA facilitated) to promote and share information.

**9. Evaluation**

Please provide an outline of the methods you will use to evaluate the participants' learning and your project's efficiency and effectiveness.

A multi-pronged evaluation model will be used to capture the effectiveness, benefits and progress against a number of dimensions:

Using a model from the **Communities of Practice literature for measuring Community Health and Added Value** developed through participation in the CoP, an evaluation tool which aims to measure value and benefit to individuals/organisations will be employed. This will be conducted at stages during the project in informal self-evaluation type questions, culminating in a final evaluation at the conclusion of the project; Measures include: Sense of Community (Frequency of events, energy of facilitator and participants, formation of core group members); Domain of practice (to what extent does the community take ownership of the domain?); Infrastructure and management support developed (sponsorship by organisation, place for conversations to occur eg online discussions).

The measures of community health are somewhat different depending on where the community is in its lifecycle, somewhat like the measures of health in people, which may be different at different ages.

The "rhythm" of the community-the number and frequency of events-is a good predictor of community health in early stage communities. Communities need time for members to develop trust-based relationships. Measures of value at this stage focus on helping members develop relationships and help each another solve problems.

Membership surveys of healthy, mature communities will include anecdotes about solving problems among members as well as gaining value from connections to other communities.

The above focus for data gathering will also include the Cohen and Prusak (2001) criteria for **analysing health of a network/CoP** with a focus on the following elements–

- Trust (The evaluation strategy will monitor the following four aspects of Relational Trust – Respect, Competence, Personal regard for others and Integrity which sit at the core of membership of a CoP.)
- Knowledge
- Access

- Engagement
- Safety

The CoP Facilitator will also undertake assessment of the effectiveness of the CoP at the various stages as per the Stages of Development of a CoP. This will include reflective as well as questionnaire information and an audit of themes, events, artifacts etc developed and shared. (Includes focus questions from Brinkerhoff 1987).

**Self-evaluation** whereby the CoP members will continually monitor the progress against reflective/evaluation criteria – assess levels of participation; direction and rate of progress; benefits from participation; effectiveness of strategy and actions.

## 10. Project timeframe

Please list project milestones and key dates

(Please add rows as required)

Milestone	Key date
Project Action Plan	June 5 – Tuesday
Community Launch – Looking at Competency: a community development approach Brian Spencer –Executive Director Victorian Community Services & Health Industry Training Board	June 28
Coopting the CoP [Potential]	June 28/29
Community Building session: setting up the Domain Inquiry - focus on models/practice RPL; [Potential] Forming Practice groups [Coalescing] Setting up online mechanism [Coalescing]	July 18
Community Building session: Projects, practices, guest speaker [Coalescing] Boundary spanning - Practice Groups – ongoing online	August
Mid Term report	August 28 – Tuesday
Domain Inquiry -Community Sharing session: What and how are we learning? [Active] Boundary spanning – Practice groups – ongoing online	September
Mid-term forum	September 19
Domain Inquiry -Community Sharing session: What and how are we learning? [Active] Boundary spanning Practice groups – ongoing online	October
Forum – Are we there yet? Project/process reflection; sharing practices, tools, models, learnings, etc. Guest speaker	November
National forum Brisbane	November 19-20
Project Final Report	November 27 - Tuesday