BUILDING ONLINE COMMUNITIES:

USING PARTICIPATORY METHODS AND WEB 2.0 TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN THE NETWORKS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING PRACTITIONERS AT UBC

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Building Online Communities:

Using Participatory Methods and Web 2.0 Tools to Strengthen the Networks of Community Service Learning Practitioners at UBC

By Danielle Blond Wauthy

November 24th, 2009

University of British Columbia

School of Community and Regional Planning

Professional Project

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Dedication

For my Dad

For your love, your strength and for always believing in me

You are dearly missed

Acknowledgements

I wish to sincerely thank all of the many people who helped me throughout this project. I feel truly blessed!

First, I would first like to thank the UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI for partnering with me on this project, and to all the wonderful staff that supported and helped me achieve this vision. A very special thanks to the Director and my supervisor, Dr. Margo Fryer, for her guidance throughout this project, for being a mentor and an inspiration to me over these past three years, and for all the many opportunities she has given me to learn and grow. I would also like to thank Dr. Penny Gurstein for her flexibility and for helping me to finish this project.

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November 23, 2009

Executive Summary

As an approach to experiential education, community service learning (CSL) is gaining popularity at the University of British Columbia (UBC). CSL allows students the unique opportunity to learn about academic concepts through a hands-on approach in the community. UBC is dedicated to creating exceptional learning environments and according to UBC's newly crafted vision, *Place and Promise*, CSL is recognized as one of the key ways to help students become deeply engaged in their communities and develop a commitment to global citizenship.

One of the ways CSL is being advanced at UBC is through the UBC-Community Learning Initiative (UBC-CLI). Since its inception in 2006, the UBC-CLI has acted as the "bridge" between the many actors involved, specifically between the university and the community. However, this present structure is no longer seen as being the most effective as it limits the direct relationship building and communication links between and among the actors themselves. Therefore, the director of the UBC-CLI has called for a shift in the role of centralized units like the UBC-CLI from engaging directly in planning and implementing CSL, to strengthening the networks of students, instructors, project leaders, and community organizations involved.

To achieve this shift, the UBC-CLI proposed the creation of learning communities, more formally known as "Communities of Practice." Specifically they wanted to explore using online learning communities that would allow members who are geographically dispersed to connect, communicate, share experiences and resources, reflect on practice, learn from each other, and develop new knowledge.

Through a partnership with the UBC-CLI, online communities were assessed to understand how they could be built and used to strengthen networks and promote learning communities. From a review of the literature, the method used to create online communities was deemed important and that involving the future users in the creation of online communities was crucial for their success. Therefore, partnering with UBC's Office of Learning Technology (OLT), a pilot project was conceptualized that would engage one of the groups of CSL actors (Project Leaders) to collaboratively build their online learning community.

This report describes and reflects upon the processes used and the outcomes of the pilot project. It describes eleven principles (drawing from community development, participatory design, and principles of good facilitation) that guided the design and implementation of the engagement process. It offers insight into both the power of participation and the complexities of facilitating a participatory process surrounding technology design.

Recommendations are offered based upon lessons learned and participant evaluations. These are directed towards two separate audiences: The UBC-CLI in order to assist them in accomplishing their vision of strengthening networks, and to other potential facilitators wanting to undergo this type of process.

Four recommendations targeted to the UBC-CLI are:

1. Create a strategic plan for the continuation of this collaborative engagement with the other groups of CSL actors. This plan should include: vision, principles, targets, process steps and evaluation guidelines.
2. Create a long-term plan for growing and supporting the online communities that have been developed. This plan should include ideas for encouraging growth and guidelines for the moderation and the continual evaluation of the site.

3. Create a staff position to help create the above documents and to continue to develop the Project Leader online community, nurture it throughout its development and help to evaluate it at the end of the academic year.
4. Continue to develop and nurture the relationship with OLT and seek to build new partnership opportunities.

Seven recommendations for future facilitators include:

1. Draw from principles of community development, participatory design and good facilitation when designing the process.
2. Be clear with participants about what their participation with lead to and the decision making power they hold.
3. Encourage participant ownership. This can be done through focusing on the 'soft' outcomes of the process, being clear about the role of the facilitator, involving the participants in the creation of session agendas, involving participants in the creation of evaluation criteria, and evaluating after every session.
4. Be dedicated to the participants first and the technology second.
5. Be cognizant of the timing of the process.
6. Include an array of participation options, focusing on offering both broad and deep levels of participation.
7. Pay attention to small details during the process that allow participants to feel valued.

There is great potential for this new Project Leader online community to impact the future of community service learning at UBC. Its power is in its ability to strengthen, support and aid project leaders in communicating with each other. This reflects a positive step towards UBC-CLI's vision of strengthening actors in CSL instead of being the centralized unit or "central lynchpin" that holds everything together (Fryer, 2009 p. 12). It will be through the continual development of these learning communities that CSL will grow to become a more organic system, containing many rich networks of people working and learning together. This is just the beginning of an exciting movement in CSL at UBC, and potentially throughout Canada, as other universities look to draw on UBC's innovation and expertise.

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List of Acronyms

CBR	Community-Based Research
CLI	Community Learning Initiative
CLILP	Community Learning Initiative-Leadership Program
CSL	Community service learning
OLT	Office of Learning Technology
PD	Participatory Design
SCARP	School of Community and Regional Planning
UBC	University of British Columbia
WWW	World Wide Web

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This project is about using community development and participatory planning principles to design an online space that will serve to strengthen the network of actors involved in community service learning (CSL) at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Specifically, this report is the description and evaluation of the CSL 'Project Leader Online Community' pilot engagement project that took place between March and May of 2009. This project involved past CSL Project Leaders in a participatory process where, through a series of workshops, collaboratively designed an online space to support Project Leaders involved in CSL at UBC.

Community Service Learning and UBC

Community service-learning (CSL) is an experiential approach to education that combines classroom learning with volunteer work in the community that achieves community goals.[1] There are three key elements of CSL: voluntary work in community settings that achieves goals or meets needs identified by the community; academic content that relates to the nature of the service; and structured reflection activities that encourage connections between what students are studying and what they are experiencing in the community. What sets CSL apart from other experiential education is its intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service and to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring (Furco, 1996 p.5).

At UBC, this type of experiential education is greatly valued and acknowledged as a means to help prepare UBC students to become exceptional global citizens. UBC's Trek 2010 vision highlights this importance:[2]

> "The University of British Columbia, aspiring to be one of the world's best universities, will prepare students to become exceptional global citizens, promote the values of a civil and sustainable society, and conduct outstanding research to serve the people of British Columbia, Canada, and the world."

One of the ways it proposes to prepare students is through connecting them with their community, specifically through the expansion of CSL courses and programs. This Trek 2010 vision also incorporates the goal of having 10% of the student population participating in CSL programs by 2010.

Recently, UBC President Stephen Toope, in the new vision statement for UBC called *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan*,[3] also declares the importance of having students deeply engaged in their communities. This plan outlines UBC's commitment to community engagement, and CSL is emphasized as a way to foster student, faculty, staff and alumni engagement within the wider community. This plan also states UBC's commitment to student learning, and again CSL is

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[1] See www.learningexchange.ubc.ca for more information about CSL at UBC

[2] See http://www.trek2000.ubc.ca/GlobalJourney.html

[3] See http://www.strategicplan.ubc.ca/vision_mission/#community

highlighted as one avenue to provide students with a "special educational enrichment opportunity" during their time at UBC.

Through this CSL experience, members from the community are encouraged to become co-educators, and students have the unique opportunity to develop understanding of their roles as citizens while building their capacity to actively engage in their communities (see www.csl.ubc.ca).

The UBC-Community Learning Initiative

One of the key ways CSL is being advanced at UBC is through the UBC-Community Learning Initiative (UBC-CLI). As a subset of the UBC Learning Exchange, the UBC-CLI was launched in 2006 as a model for the advancement of course-based CSL and Community-Based Research (CBR) at UBC.[4] Its goal is to promote CSL in order to fulfill UBC's vision. The UBC-CLI seeks to strengthen the capacity of those involved in CSL and works hard to support UBC Faculty/Instructors, Non-Profit Organizations in the community, and CSL project leaders, so as to ensure that students have a high quality CSL experience.

In 2008-09 through this initiative, over 30 courses in several disciplines at UBC offered students the option of participating in CSL. Typically, students who choose this CSL component work in small teams on short-term projects either in an inner-city school or community organization. These projects are focused on achieving goals set by the community, whilst creating learning opportunities that allow students to connect the academic concepts learned in class to a hands-on, real life project in the community. For example, students link the theoretical concepts of sustainability to a sustainability project set by the community (e.g. to further understand environmental sustainability, students design and build compost bins out of recycled material with the YWCA).

In 2008-09 over 1000 students participated in this type of learning. This represents a 66% increase from the previous year.[5]

How does the UBC-CLI model of CSL work?

The UBC-CLI model of CSL requires the collaboration of many actors to create these unique learning opportunities for students. These include: UBC Faculty and Instructors who build CSL into their curriculum, community organizations and inner city schools who create partnerships with UBC and identify projects that meet their goals and objectives, and CSL Project Leaders (typically UBC staff and graduate students) who lead groups of undergraduate students in their CSL project.

The original purpose of the UBC-CLI was to act as the "bridge" between these actors, specifically between UBC and the community, facilitating relationships and partnerships by seeking out community organizations interested in CSL and connecting them with interested UBC Faculty/Instructors. However, in the fall of 2009, the Director of the UBC-CLI released a strategic plan stating how it proposes to advance CSL/CBR at UBC over the next five years, outlining a needed shift from this initial structure. It states that from their experience they no longer see this original model as being the most effective, especially as they recognize that

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[4] See www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/ubc-cli.html for more information about the UBC-CLI

[5] For more information a please refer to the UBC-CLI annual reports that can be found at: http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/ubc-cli.html

personal relationships between and among these actors are fundamental to the success of CSL. It suggests shifting away from a top-down structure to one mimicking a more organic complex adaptive system. The report states:

> "Rather than expecting that the growth of CSL and CBR will occur primarily through the implementation of top-down institutional policies and the work of staff members who act as bridges between fixed entities, the metaphor of complex adaptive systems suggest that change can occur through the contagious influence of [CSL] champions, the creation of fertile conditions for collaboration, including the articulation of context-specific, ground-up rules for engagement, and the co-creation of "hybrid" cultural spaces" (Fryer, 2009 p. 6).

It calls for a shift in the role of centralized units like the UBC-CLI from engaging directly in planning and implementing CSL/CBR, to strengthening the networks of students, instructors and community organizations involved (Fryer, 2009 p.7). It highlights the importance of the communication links among and between these actors in the network as being crucial for the network's ability to function and adapt.

Therefore, carrying out projects that strengthen, support and aid these actors to communicate with each other is an extremely important task for the UBC-CLI and its vision for the advancement of CSL at UBC.

1.2 The Project Leader Online Community Pilot Project

As previously stated, the UBC-CLI wants to achieve its vision of advancing CSL at UBC through building and strengthening networks of CSL actors. One method to accomplish this is through facilitating interaction where actors can come together to share resources, knowledge, and important lessons learned. In essence this entails encouraging the development of "learning communities", known more formally as "Communities of Practice." According to Wenger (2006), Communities of Practice are "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" (p.1). By creating these types of communities, CSL practitioners can draw on other's expertise, knowledge and resources to create high quality CSL experiences.

Often these types of communities develop from continual face-to-face interaction, but there are other modes of interaction that can encourage the creation of these communities. CSL actors at UBC are geographically diffused (e.g. faculty members on campus in many different departments, non-profits out in the community), hence it is not an easy task to maintain consistent and frequent face-to-face interactions. Therefore, it was envisioned by the UBC-CLI that one of the ways to encourage and create these learning communities would be through the use of the Internet, and the creation of online or virtual communities. With the rise of Web 2.0[6], the Internet is now very capable of facilitating this type of interaction (this is explored more thoroughly in Section 2.0).

This idea for using online communities as a way for CSL actors to connect and distribute information grew out of an internship with the UBC Learning Exchange in the summer of 2008. In collaboration with Dr. Margo Fryer, Director of the UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI, the idea arose to collate all of the current CSL resources that the UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI

[6] Web 2.0 differs from Web 1.0 in that it allows for social connection among users with the use of social software such as blogs and wikis.

and other CSL actors possessed, with the hopes to be able to disseminate resources quickly to all of the different actors in CSL. At a similar time, a colleague at the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) proposed the idea of developing a new web space, devoted solely to CSL at UBC to act as the holding place for all of these resources. Over time this internship evolved into the opportunity to create a new web space that would not only be a repository of resources, but a space where CSL practitioners could connect. From there it was soon realized that in order for this new web space to be useful to the CSL practitioners, it was necessary to hear from and include them in the creation of this website.

This idea then developed into my graduate project for the completion of requirements for my planning degree in SCARP. As a social planning masters candidate, I saw this as an exciting opportunity to:

- Use participatory planning methods to bring people together to engage in dialogue and collaborative decision-making,
- Learn about new technological tools to promote citizen engagement and the building of networks, social capital and social learning,
- Partner with the UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI to help them take steps towards fulfilling their strategic vision of shifting away from top-down command and control to one encouraging grassroots approaches,
- Build up the future capacity of CSL practitioners,
- Contribute to advancing CSL at UBC.

Furthermore, I saw CSL contributing to community development and social change by:

- Presenting students with the opportunity to work within the community and learn how it is connected to the career they want to pursue. This experience allows for self-reflection, which could lead to more students mobilizing around important community issues, culminating in active involved citizens.
- Focusing on relationship building and social learning. This helps increase the capacity among students and members of the community to understand the importance of working together to help solve local issues.
- Encouraging partnerships between UBC and the community. These partnerships enable the needed shift away from UBC being an "ivory tower" to an institution that values and empowers the community to see themselves as educators.
- Building up and empowering community assets. CSL gives the community a voice as to what is important to them. This can serve to create further capacity in the community.

Therefore, through partnership with the UBC-CLI and UBC's Office of Learning Technology (OLT), it was decided that we would run a pilot project using participatory methods to engage one of the groups of actors in CSL. Through this process participants would collaboratively create the shell of an online community where a learning community could eventually develop. This pilot project would then become the website showcase piece for all other groups of actors in CSL with the hopes of repeating this process with them.

As stated previously, there are numerous actors involved in CSL and we decided to pilot this project with the CSL Project Leaders.

Why CSL Project Leaders?

CSL Project Leaders are UBC graduate students, UBC staff, or employees from the corporate or community sector. They go through a series of training which prepares them for planning and leading a small team of undergraduate students in a short-term project in the community. The training programs vary. Interested participants may choose to apply to take part in a leadership program where they are trained through a series of leadership training workshops (called the Community Learning Initiative-Leadership Program CLILP), or to enroll in a yearlong course (PLAN 548B) at SCARP.

The planning of this short-term project requires that the leaders work closely with the community organization or school, as well as the respective UBC Instructor to ensure that the project meets the objectives and needs of everyone involved. The actual implementation of the project requires that the leaders facilitate the planned daily activities (including engaging the students in reflective discussions), support the students by creating a safe learning environment, and ensure the safety of everyone involved.

The task of being a Project Leader is both exciting and daunting. For some, this is the first time they have participated in such a program, and for others this is a chance to use their previous leadership or facilitation skills in an exciting new way.

We chose to pilot this project with previous CSL Project Leaders for a number of reasons:

First, the timing of the pilot project seemed to work well for the Project Leaders. The process was set to begin in the middle of March, and the leadership training programs ended in early March. Therefore the timing of this pilot project fit well with the schedule, with the experiences of being a Project Leader still fresh in participants' minds. This timing also proved to be a challenge for the process, which will be discussed further in Section 5.0.

Secondly, thinking of the groups of actors involved in CSL (Faculty/Instructors, Community Organizations, Students, Project Leaders), Project Leaders had potentially a higher willingness to engage in this type of pilot project. One of the training programs had previously been using an online space as a means to connect, therefore "selling" this idea to the Project Leaders did not require a lot of effort as technology and its use for this purpose had already been introduced to some of the previous leaders.

Thirdly, I had previously been a CSL Project Leader in 2007-2008 and had the opportunity to be involved in the yearlong SCARP course. This gave me first hand knowledge of the importance of journeying through this experience with fellow colleagues and receiving their support and advice. Because my training was part of a yearlong academic class, my colleagues and I had the benefit of meeting twice a week, constantly being able to connect with one another about concerns or challenges. Yet not all Project Leaders have this similar experience or network of support. Some of the training programs only meet once a month, so there is little opportunity to develop these support networks. Also, leaders from different training programs have not previously had an avenue to connect with each other. Because of this, I felt that Project Leaders would be very receptive to the ideas of creating inter and intra-networks of support. In my time as a leader I was also struck by the abundance of energy, passion and expertise that my colleagues possessed and was personally excited about the potential of a space where these assets could be shared and mobilized with a wider group.

Lastly, as I would act as the main facilitator of this pilot process (my co-facilitator, was a consultant in online community building), possessing previous knowledge of the overall mission

of project leaders, their training experiences, and their challenges would be very beneficial to the process and help me relate to the group.

1.3 Project Goal and Objectives

The overall goal of this project was two-fold. First to investigate the benefits of online communities and how they contribute to social capital and social learning, and second to design and facilitate an engagement process that would lead to a collaboratively designed online space. The outcome of this process would be the shell of an online space that, when populated, would act to support and strengthen the network of CSL Project Leaders at UBC.

This project report will outline the relevant academic literature, present the process used, document the lessons learned, and highlight key recommendations to the UBC-CLI and others thinking of undergoing similar processes.

Five specific objectives guide this project:

1. To explain why the UBC-CLI wants to build and strengthen networks among CSL practitioners
2. To assess the benefits and challenges of online communities and their potential role in helping to create learning communities/Communities of Practice
3. To develop and facilitate a participatory process to create the shell for a CSL Project Leader Online Community
4. To evaluate and discuss the community building process and how the outcome will help to support a Project Leader Community of Practice
5. To make recommendations to the UBC-CLI that can help contribute to the future success of their initiative

The outcome of this project will be a website shell and a report. As stated previously, this website will benefit CSL at UBC, the UBC-CLI, current and future CSL Project Leaders, and all other current and prospective practitioners of CSL. It will act as a showcase piece for the creation of similar online communities for other groups of CSL actors. Furthermore, this project will contribute to the knowledge surrounding community development, participatory planning processes, and specifically the body of literature surrounding participatory design.

1.4 Method and Approach

I approached this project by first undertaking a literature review to understand the benefits of online communities, how online communities could support an eventual learning community (focusing on how they can contribute to social capital and social learning) and the best methods to design them. From this review it was seen that successful online communities are designed by and with the users of the community. One specific approach that fit well in fulfilling this purpose is Participatory Design (PD). PD is an approach to technology building, which values the active involvement of the intended user. It includes collaboration among the designers, developers and users from the early stages of conception through to implementation (more discussion of this PD approach is found in Section 2.0).

Therefore, in creating this strategy I drew specifically from the PD approach and more generally from the principles of community development and participatory processes. From this, an eight-stage process was designed, which included a three-part workshop engagement series

that involved past Project Leaders and staff from UBC's OLT. This process is outlined in detail in Section 4.0.

Throughout this project I experienced some limitations:

- This process ended up not being open to all past project leaders. The UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI felt the process would get more participation if personal invitations were limited to only those Project Leaders recommended by their trainers. Because leader training had just finished, they were sensitive to burnout and felt that not all leaders would want to participate. Another limiting factor was that this collaborative engagement would occur in a workshop format and only a limited number of spaces were available. Therefore this resulted in the project not being entirely inclusive or participatory.
- There was a high rate of attrition throughout the process. Workshop #1 (two separate sessions were ran for this workshop) had 15 participants, Workshop #2 had six, and Workshop #3 had four. Therefore the last two workshops did not receive as much input and participation as hoped for. Possible reasons and implications of this are discussed in Section 5.0.
- The timing of the project was short, as the workshops were scheduled to complete within seven weeks. From the literature, other PD projects have run for a longer time period, some up to five years. Compared to such example, this process was slightly rushed. Many participants experienced scheduling difficulties and conflicts, which may have contributed to the high attrition rate.

These limitations may have influenced the outcome of the engagement process, however, I did not see these limitations as a barrier to satisfying the project's goals and objectives.

1.5 Structure of the Report

The structure of this report is as follows:

- **Section 2.0**: A literature review outlining the benefits of online communities, and how they could support a learning community (their contribution to social capital and social learning)
- **Section 3.0**: A description of the guiding principles used to design and facilitate the workshop engagement process
- **Section 4.0**: A description of the Project Leader Online Community process, outlining in detail what occurred at each stage
- **Section 5.0**: A discussion of the strengths and challenges of the process and how the outcome could enable the creation of a learning community
- **Section 6.0**: Main lessons learned and recommendations to the UBC-CLI and those interested in undertaking similar processes
- **Section 7.0**: Conclusions and next steps

2.0 Literature Review

The following section presents the benefits and challenges of online communities. It outlines how these online communities can support a 'learning community' or 'Community of Practice', focusing on their contribution to social capital formation and social learning. It culminates with what the literature says are the strategies necessary to create successful online communities.

2.1 Defining Community

The definition of 'community' and what constitutes a community has shifted, as communities are no longer strictly defined by their geographical space. According to Andrews (2002), a community can be defined "as a set of relationships where people interact socially for mutual benefit" (p.64). Similarly Foth (2003) claims that the essential denominator of community is "people who establish relations between each other out of various motivations and for various purposes" (p.32). He claims that, "one must adopt a holistic perspective taking new forms and occurrences of community and social relationships into consideration" (ibid).

The Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) are contributing to the building of these kinds of communities, as these technologies promote interaction, communication, and relationship building among people in cyberspace. Plant (2004) claims that "the ubiquity of the Internet and the human desire for connection, knowledge and information, has created a new social phenomenon, that of the online community" (p.52). Scott (2005) claims that some of the most heavily visited sites on the WWW are platforms for large and active online communities. WWW creator Tim Berners-Lee (2000) states, "The ultimate goal of the web is to support and improve our web-like existence in this world" (p. 127). These online communities allow us to connect with those we may not necessarily be linked geographically to. They use infrastructure from the Web 2.0 phenomenon which has emerged over the past few years offering tools such as blogs, wikis, social networks, tagging systems, mash-ups, and content sharing sites that emphasize participation (Brown and Alder, 2008). But what exactly are online communities, and why would planners be interested in them?

2.2 What is an Online Community?

Online communities (or virtual communities) have been defined in many ways and their definition differs based on the purpose and goal of that particular community. One simplistic definition put forth by *Full Circle* (a website devoted to sharing information about online communities), is that an online community is the "gathering of people, in an online 'space' where they come, communicate, connect, and get to know each other better over time" (Boetcher, 2002 p.1). Preece (2000) states that in an online community members exchange ideas, help one another and develop rewarding partnerships. She suggests that online communities consist of people interacting socially, a shared purpose that provides a reason for the community, policies that guide people's interactions, and the computer systems to support the social interaction (p.10). Rheingold (1993) presents one of the first accounts of an online community (the WELL[7]). He colourfully describes what people do in these virtual communities, stating that they "use words on a screen to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud,

[7] This online community is still operating today. See www.thewell.com

fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk" (p.3). He defines a virtual community as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (ibid p.5).

Some common terms to describe the different types of online communities are "virtual communities", "online communities of interest", "virtual (or online) Communities of Practice", and "virtual learning communities." Plant (2004) claims that it is important to distinguish between these varieties as they involve different effects on member participation, motivation and the potential to create social capital.

The more popular type of online community is created around common interests. These 'online communities of interest' form around a general topic, such as gardening, and members join to discuss this topic. Members in this type of community are generally dispersed around the globe and might never meet each other in person. More recently, terms such as 'online Communities of Practice' and 'virtual Communities of Practice' have appeared in the literature as another form of online community. These communities differentiate from 'online communities of interest' because they not only allow members to communicate around an issue that they are interested in, but according to Gannon-Leary (2007), members in these communities share resources (experiences, problems, solutions, tools, methodologies) and this communication results in "the improvement of the knowledge of each participant in the community and contributes to the development of the knowledge within the domain" (p.1). This type of community is more in line with traditional Communities of Practice, and focuses on knowledge development as one of its key purposes.

2.3 Discussion of the Benefits and Challenges of Online Communities

The review of the literature indicates that there are some key benefits of online communities. It is important to note that I am not suggesting that online communities are superior to face-to-face communities or that one should choose between either. Rather my hope is to point out some of the key benefits of online communities keeping in mind that most of these benefits will accrue from these communities being complementary to each other. As Wellman et al. (2002) points out regarding the debate between online and offline communities, emphasis should be placed on how online communities can become integrated with offline, face-to-face communities (cited in Ferlander, 2003 p.109).

One benefit of being online and creating a community online is the potential for documentation and the capacity to store information. Cross (2006) describes the importance of the web being that "learning does not become a one-shot deal, forgotten when one graduates" (p.183). Particularly for online communities of practice, this can be very important. Zhang (2008) suggests that unlike conventional communities of practice, online communities of practice can capture and store participation, and content can be easily stored for browsing, searching, retrieving, analyzing, visualizing, and mining. She claims that a "recorded history helps members learn not only about past community practice but also about the identities of individual members because it is their participations that were recorded. This way, the recorded history becomes a great learning resource in online communities" (ibid p. 59).

Another benefit found in the literature surrounds the text-based medium of the Internet. Norris (2004) finds that "textual communication via the internet strips away the standard visual and aural cues of social identity- including those of gender, race, age, and socioeconomic status" (p.33). Johnson (2001) claims that asynchronous communication is the "great equalizer" (Wepner

and Mobley, 1998 cited in Johnson, 2001 p.54) because traditional group norms caused by physical presence does not occur. Online communities have the potential then to "foster equality of status and participation among members" (Hiltz and Turoff, 1993 cited in Blanchard, 1998 p.297) allowing those who may be more reserved in face to face situations, to be heard. Another advantage of this text-based medium is in the act of writing itself. Writing for public viewing forces individuals to reflect on their thoughts and actions before writing, and as Cross (2006) points out "explaining something online clarifies your own thinking and reinforces your own learning" (Cross p.178).

Unique to online communities are their flexibility and accessibility (day or night), and that a single act of support (a member giving advice or sharing a resource) can be viewed by the entire network of members. The Internet has made the process of exchanged support more accessible and visible to others (Abbott, 1998 cited in Ferlander, 2003 p.125). Blanchard (1998) claims that these simple acts of help and support can sustain a large online community because the entire group witnesses this act.

However, these aforementioned benefits will not necessarily accrue if members do not actively participate in these online communities, as one particular challenge for online communities is member participation. Recently the concept of 'lurking' has been addressed in the literature. 'Lurkers' are those who join the community, read messages but do not necessarily participate in the discussion. This can be a stumbling block for the growth of a community because not all members are participating. Recently though it has been shown that 'lurkers' do play a key role in online communities as this act of lurking could be a necessary step in order for a member to feel comfortable enough to start participating.[8]

Member participation is also affected by an individual's motivation to contribute to the community. In a study done by Wasko and Faraj (2005), regarding why individuals share in online communities, they found that individuals contribute knowledge when they perceive that it enhances their reputations and because it is enjoyable to help others. Peter Kollack (1998) in his research on motivation for contributing to online communities found the key motivations to be: anticipated reciprocity (where a person is motivated to contribute valuable information to the group in expectation that they will receive useful help and information in return), increased reputation (individuals want recognition for their contributions and find it motivating to receive direct responses to their contributions) and sense of efficacy (where individuals contribute because the act results in a sense of efficacy helping individuals believe they have a high impact on the group). Individual motivations are important to be aware of, especially as not all participants will be willing to share (to understand more about what drives individuals to carry out action, please see Bishop, 2007). Other factors that affect member participation include lack of access to an Internet connection, lack of time, and technical difficulties (e.g. if they are receiving error messages while trying to participate or if a link is not working properly it will dissuade people to participate) (Riverin, 2008).

2.4 Online Communities and Social Capital

One of the main benefits of online communities is their potential to create and enhance social capital. Social capital is an important resource to all communities as it facilitates

[8] To read more about lurking see Preece, 2004.

relationship building and according to Becks (2004) helps to foster knowledge sharing and collaborative learning.

Social capital does not have one universally recognized definition (Pruijt, 2002 cited in Blanchard, 2004 p.53) although these definitions share in common the central idea that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource. Putnam (1995), for example, defines social capital as the connections among individuals, their social networks, their norms of reciprocity, and the trust that arises from them. Similarly Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as

> "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network" (p.243).

Social capital benefits individuals as they can use membership in communities and networks to secure benefits such as easy access to information and knowledge gathered by others in the community (Daniel, 2003).

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) clarify the dimensions of social capital claiming that social capital possesses three separate but interrelated dimensions: structural, relational and cognitive. They claim the structural dimension refers to the formation of networks among individuals. These networks contain both what Granovetter (1973) calls "strong ties"- those with multiple contacts on a regular basis, and "weak ties" where contact with individuals is less frequent. The relational dimension refers to the relationships people have developed with each other focusing on issues of trust, shared norms and values, expectations and identity that are crucial in developing social capital among members. The last dimension cognitive, focuses on the need for shared meanings and language among members. Lesser (2000) makes the point that without a common understanding or vocabulary, it is difficult to construct the connections necessary to create and foster social capital. Narayan and Pritchett (1997) suggest that communities with high social capital have frequent interaction which cultivate norms of reciprocity through which learners become more willing to help each other, which improves coordination and dissemination of information and knowledge sharing (cited in Daniel, 2003).

Social capital is often found and created in face-to-face communities, but recent discussions in the literature show that social capital can occur with the use of the Internet. Quan-Haase and Wellman (2004) state that the Internet occupies a crucial place in everyday life, and that the Internet is transforming and adding to social capital. They see the Internet as offering meeting spaces for common interests, one that overcomes the limitations of time and space, enabling the creation of new social relationships. Similarly Robert Putnam (2000) argues that community and civic engagement in America is declining but that a shift in community and social relationships towards the Internet has the potential to revive social capital. He claims, "the Internet will not automatically offset the decline in more conventional forms of social capital, but that it has potential" (cited in Foth, 2003 p. 33). Similarly Preece (2000) sees the Internet as helping to integrate society, foster social trust and increase social capital by making it easier for people to stay in contact and build new relationships.

Specifically in relation to online communities, Daniel (2003) defines social capital as a "common social resource that facilitates information exchange, knowledge sharing, and knowledge construction through continuous interaction built on trust and maintained through shared understanding" (p. 24). Online communities enhance social capital through the bridging and bonding of people. According to Norris (2004), bridging and bonding are two key

components of Putnam's formulation of social capital and she finds that most Americans feel that their membership in online communities both widens and deepens their social relationships, but the strength of this effect varies by type of online group (p.40).

Blanchard (1998) has applied the concepts of social networks, norms, and trust (as described by Putnam as essential parts of the theory of social capital) to online communities. She claims that virtual communities promote social capital when they increase network density and facilitate the spread of information. In terms of norms, Blanchard concludes that the norms in a virtual community affect social capital because online, reciprocal acts of help and support occur and these small acts of help create the perception of a strong norm of reciprocity within a virtual community. [9] Regarding the concept of trust, Blanchard sees trust as an interesting concept in virtual communities and warns against the potential negative aspects that could decrease trust, such as deception of identity and flaming.[10] Nichani (2001) discusses this concept of trust in online communities and claims that both time and space is required for trust to develop and that it grows as people are exposed to one another and share their experiences (cited in Chapman, 2004). Interestingly, Becks (2004) claims that one avenue where computer applications contribute to social capital is the actual building of trust within social entities, that it may open up additional channels among actors to encourage trust building.

Not only do online communities have the potential to promote and encourage social capital creation, but this idea of social capital acts as a support for learning among its members. Chapman (2004) states that,

> "Social capital can be thought of as the framework that supports the process of learning through interaction. The quality of the social processes and relationships within which learning interactions take place is especially influential on the quality of learning outcomes. This suggests that social capital plays an important role in fostering the social networks and information exchanged necessary for learning to happen" (p.305).

This question of how online communities can facilitate the process of social learning is addressed next.

2.5 Online Communities and Social Learning

Another important outcome of online communities is their ability to produce and support social learning. In talking about virtual communities of practice, Johnson (2001) states that "the learning that evolved from these communities is collaborative, in which the collaborative knowledge of the community is greater than any individual knowledge" (p.34). Johnson then shows that online communities can become tools to encourage and enhance social learning.

The term social learning has various interpretations and different theoretical roots. Holden (2008) describes three theoretical approaches to social learning: organizational learning, communicative action, and pragmatism.[11] In the planning profession, Friedmann (1987) claims

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[9] People pose questions and other members answer it either directly or provide information to the whole group. Members might also offer unsolicited information to the whole group that they feel might be useful (Nickerson, 1994 cited in Blanchard).

[10] Flaming occurs when people intentionally write or post negative messages.

[11] For further information on these theories, see Holden, 2008 p.14.

that social learning is rooted in the philosophical pragmatism of John Dewey and his "learning by doing", which states that all valid knowledge comes from experience and through experience. According to Friedmann (ibid.), the social learning approach is about action and learning. Through action and experience, the individual acquires useful information that may lead to cumulative learning, and this learning can be either single or double looped learning.[12] Blackmar (1973) describes social learning as a conscious process of action (where action can be described as the day to day social activities or experiences of a culture), which results in new understanding, or learning. Social learning then refers to a process by which the individual learns about society (or themselves, their environment, the nature of the problem), through taking action upon it. The social learning system, according to Blackmar "reflects the shared experiences of its members and becomes capable of changing its goals and boundaries in response to such experience" (p.14).

In creating a social learning environment, Tippett (2005) claims that effective participation can only take place in an environment of trust, transparency, respect and openness. According to Webler (1995) social learning can be broken into two components, cognitive enhancement and moral development. Cognitive enhancement involves participants gaining technical competence and learning about collective values and preferences. This includes learning about the state of the problem, possible solutions, other people's interests in the problem, acknowledging your own interests, learning about the communication methods required to reach agreement with the group and practicing integrated thinking about the problem. He defines moral development as the ability of individuals to make judgments about right and wrong which involves developing a sense of self-respect and responsibility to self and others, developing moral reasoning and problem solving skills, developing a sense of solidarity with the group and learning how to cooperate with others. Wildermeersch (1998) identifies that action, reflection, communication and cooperation are the four axes of social learning. Social learning is action and experience-orientated, is critically reflective (individuals question the validity of particular opinions, judgments, strategies, actions, emotions), and it is cooperative and communicative where the dialogue between individuals is crucial (cited in Percy-Smith, 2006).

Friedmann (1987) states that one of the key aspects of social learning is this idea of dialogue. The central assumption of social learning according to Friedmann is that,

> "All effective learning comes from the experience of changing reality. It is related to human activity, focusing attention on dynamic social processes, examining problems from the perspective of an actor actually engaged in practice, using the concept of a social environment as a major category in the analysis of learning situations, and emphasizing the crucial importance of dialogue for social practice" (p.217).

Friedmann claims that this dialogue requires interpersonal skills, such as the art of listening, the ability to trust others, a willingness to suspend rank and material power, and a responsiveness to others' needs.

Taking the concepts of Tippett, Webler, Wildermeersch and Friedmann into consideration, online communities can become environments for social learning to occur. Online communities,

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[12] Single looped learning is where the learning involves a change in the strategy of the action to solve a given problem, and double looped learning requires an adjustment of the norms governing the action process with a change is the actor's theory of reality, values and beliefs (Friedmann, 1987 p. 185).

as stated earlier, enable members to reflect and share knowledge on past experiences, to engage in dialogue and develop knowledge collaboratively and to become a community based on trust and respect. In discussing virtual Communities of Practice, Sobrero (2008) connects these to social learning theory. He cites Wenger (2002) who says,

> "A community of practice is not just a website, a database, or a collection of best practices. It is a group of people who interact, learn together, build relationships and in the process develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment. Having others who share your overall view of the domain and yet bring their individual perspectives on any given problem creates a social learning system that goes beyond the sum of its parts" (Wenger et al. 2002, cited in Sobrero, 2008 p.1).

Gannon-Leary (2007) also relates learning to virtual communities of practice and states that online communities encompass the concept of learning through participation and social interaction. She sees virtual communities of practice as networked environments where the necessary interactions to improve learning can occur.

Brown and Alder (2008) in their discussion of Web 2.0 and online communities discuss the opportunities the web presents for learning. They state, "the web 2.0 is creating a new kind of participatory medium that is ideal for supporting multiple modes of learning…the most profound impact of the Internet, an impact that has yet to be fully recognized, is its ability to support and expand the various aspects of social learning" (p.18). Brown and Alder (ibid) define social learning as learning through social actions (conversations and interactions with others) with the focus surrounding 'how we know'. They contrast the premise "I think, therefore I am" to "We participate, therefore we are", which shifts the focus from the content of a subject, to the learning activities and human interaction around which that content is situated. Brown and Alder also claim that an important aspect of social learning is not only learning about a subject, but "learning to be." This involves being a full participant in the field, acquiring the norms and practices, and becoming part of a community of practice. They site *Wikipedia* as an example of the power of social learning online.[13]

2.6 Online Communities and Planning

This online community phenomenon has direct impact on the realm of social planning. Merkel (2004) states that technology does have a role in community development and that it can help achieve positive community outcomes. Through the development and use of these online communities, there lies the potential to increase access to information, and to create avenues for collaboration and dialogue that enhance social learning processes and social capital leading to more effective civic engagement and community empowerment.

Online communities can become a tool to be used to engage the public and further participatory democracy. Rheingold (1993) states that virtual communities have the potential to "bring enormous leverage to ordinary citizens at relatively little cost- intellectual leverage, social leverage, commercial leverage and most importantly, political leverage" (p.4). There is evidence in the literature of using the power of technology to strengthen democracy. Information communication technology (ICT) offers the possibility of a new environment for public communication which is interactive, relatively cheap to enter, unconstrained by time or distance, and inclusive (Coleman, 2001). Scott and Johnson (2005) state that "online communities offer a

[13] See Brown and Alder, 2008, for a complete discussion of Wikipedia and social learning

number of intriguing possibilities for collective action and community development initiatives, primarily because of their convenience, accessibility and capacity to facilitate collective action or collaboration" (p.13). They claim that a carefully targeted online community project could provide interested stakeholders with a new way to participate in public dialogue, where people could learn more about public issues, and where community leaders learn more about stakeholders views. They state that through the use of monitoring discussion forums and chat rooms continuously, community developers can gain a richer and more dynamic understanding of community members' perspectives and concerns than they could with more conventional data collection strategies such as surveys or focus groups. More importantly, they state that "community development professionals can not only learn people's views on particular issues, but also learn how people respond to others' perspectives" (p.14). Community developers could also assist participants directly in building their own networks and specific tasks like scheduling meetings with interested stakeholders on specific topics. They see online communities as having "the potential to complement and support a wide range of ongoing community development tasks"(p.14).

This concept of social learning is also an important tool for planners to understand. Friedmann (1987) makes the case that social learning is a vital part of planning. He claims that social learning represents a move from "anticipatory decision making to action and social practice" (p.216). Similarly Blackmar (1973) sees social learning in planning as a "social experience" which focuses attention upon the social context of each planning situation and the role each individual can play as a social being in bringing about cooperative change. She claims that this suggests a model of planning which is,

> "Process orientated rather than a product or goal orientated; active rather than passive; situational rather than universal; participatory rather than authoritarian, and evaluated by social criteria of human development rather than economic criteria of efficiency. Planning becomes associated with social action or experimentation and with functions supporting action such as organization and guidance" (p. 13).

Holden (2008) in her analysis of social learning in a case study of Seattle also states that social learning has significance in planning. She claims, "Individuals and communities have diverse, partial and sometimes irreconcilable perspectives on public problems and solutions. Learning together where these partial views intersect, diverge and may reach compromise may be the only democratically legitimate means of devising socially reliable solutions to many contemporary planning and policy problems" (p.3). Percy Smith (2006) claims that social learning creates "a more cooperative and democratic approach to local development based on dialogue and communication between parties involved" (p.169). Pena (2006) claims that through the use of social learning, "the planner becomes the community facilitator, instead of the scientist whose role is to promote community participation in the search for solutions" (p.1). He says that this emphasizes a bottom-up approach that attempts to empower communities to solve their own problems. Online communities then have great potential to offer this space where the community can participate in dialogue and social learning.

2.7 Designing Successful Online Communities

When thinking about online communities and their potential for social capital creation and social learning, one must be aware of the danger to think, 'if we build it, they will come' as Maloney-Krichmar (2002) has found that this is not the case, nor does connectivity always ensure

community (Jones, 1995 cited in Blanchard, 1998 p.302). Simply providing electronic access to communities does not mean that communities will form and individuals will participate in them. This leads then to the next question surrounding the design of these communities. How should these online communities be designed to ensure participation and provide the platform for social network building and learning to occur?

One of the most discussed concepts in the literature regarding successful online community building is user participation. The current debate surrounds whether or not usability testing in online communities (where users test an already designed system) is sufficient, or whether there should be involvement of the future individual users from the beginning of the process. Historically, web design was centered on the idea of the "expert" web designer designing for its users. This method is now being highly contested as Alby (2008) points out that it is no guarantee of product usability. Alby discusses the shortcomings of usability testing and advocates for the "next step" in design that includes greater integration between designers and users. Similarly Schuler (1996) in his book on community networks advises that early participation in community (computer) network development and in communication infrastructure development is absolutely critical (Winner, 1986 as cited in Schuler, 1996 p.23). Kensing (1998) states that the participation of the intended users in technology design is seen as one of the preconditions for good design and will increase the likelihood that the system will be useful and well integrated into the work practices. Well-known online community builders such as Preece and Kim also advocate for user participation in the process of designing the community. Preece (2000) states that designing based on assumptions has resulted in poor unusable systems that waste hours of users time, and claims that creating and designing community networks cannot be done without considering the community members right from the start. She states that "technology isn't the most important factor in online communities, members are" (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997 cited in Preece, 2000 p.172). Similarly Kim (2000) advocates for listening to your members and understanding their wants and needs.

In discussing citizen participation and its benefits to processes, Sanoff (2005) sees participation as a source of wisdom and information about local conditions, needs and attitudes thus improving the effectiveness of decision-making. Further, he claims that the more people who are involved in a decision making process, the more likely they are to develop feelings of teamwork and cooperation thereby increasing their motivation, commitment and contribution to the group.

From the literature, two methods of designing with participation include Preece's (2000) Community Centered Development (CCD) and the concept of Participatory Design. CCD involves using techniques that encourage active and focused participation in the development process. Preece's method borrows ideas from user-centered design, contextual inquiry and participatory design. She proposes five stages for CCD: to assess community needs and analyze user tasks, to select technology and plan sociability, to design and test prototypes, to refine sociability and usability, and lastly, to welcome and nurture the community. She states that involving and understanding the needs of the community before making decisions about technology and purpose will encourage ownership among participants and increase the likelihood of the online community leading to user participation. The second method is Participatory Design (PD).

Participatory Design

PD is an approach to the design, development and assessment of technology that "places an emphasis on the active involvement of the intended users in the design and decision making process" (Moffat, 2004 p.9). It includes collaboration among designers, developers and users from the earliest stages of conception, through to implementation. Moffat (2004) claims, "It is based on the premise that the users of the system will understand their needs differently than the designers will, and both understandings are needed to ensure a successful product is developed" (p.19). It extends the user's role beyond testing an already designed prototype, to designing "with" rather than being designed "for" (Abels, 1998). This shifts the idea that users only supply the 'needs' to one of active participation in the design and decision making process. Suchman (2002) states that PD replaces the 'designer/user opposition' where designers design, and users use, and involves a different kind of "relationship that embraces mutual learning and richer layers of engagement" (Suchman, p.92 cited in Brereton, 2008 p. 102). Kensing (1998) states that creating a productive and meaningful relationship among participants and designers is of central importance.

PD began in Scandinavia in the 1970s as a way to empower labour union workers and include their input into the way computer technology was introduced into their workplaces.[14] It was motivated by a Marxist commitment to democratically empower workers and foster democracy in the workplace (Spinuzzi, 2005) Its roots lie in the ideals of a participatory democracy where collective decision-making is highly decentralized so that all individuals can learn participatory skills and can effectively participate in various ways (Sanoff, 2007).

PD practitioners are diverse in their perspectives and backgrounds however Sanoff (2007) claims that PD practitioners do share the view that every participant in a PD project is an expert in what they do, needs to be heard, and that design ideas arise in collaboration with diverse participants. McPhail et al. (1998) stress the importance of individual and group empowerment, mutual learning, inclusivity and workplace democracy. McPhail says that PD projects are about learning, the mutual learning of designers and participants, and the individual learning and reflection about the results. Sanoff claims that the factors that have been responsible for the favourable design outcomes are mutual learning and collaboration, a concept he calls "collective intelligence" (Fischer et. al, 2005 cited in Sanoff, p.213). Collective intelligence is the shared insight that comes through group interaction. Atlee claims that "when people align their individual intelligences in shared undertakings, instead of using their intelligence to undermine each other in pursuit of individual status, they are much more able to generate collective intelligence" (Atlee, 2003, cited in Sanoff, 2007 p.213).

Bloomberg and Henderson (1990) characterize the PD approach as advocating three tenets: improving quality of life, both in democratic empowerment (control over their own work organization, tools, processes) and functional empowerment (ability to perform their given tasks with ease); collaborative development, inviting participants to be co-developers and explore tacit knowledge; and iterative processes, occurring through continual participation, revisiting stages, and sustained reflection. According to Spinuzzi (2005) there are three basic steps in most PD projects:

[14] For a detailed history of PD, refer to Spinuzzi, 2005.

1. Initial exploration of users' work. This involves becoming familiar with the ways in which users work, gaining the trust of participants, studying their goals, values and needs (Nikolova-Houston, 2005). Researchers found it useful to review written materials and observe current technologies in use (Kensing, 1998), and to undergo ethnographic field work (Merkel et al., 2004).
2. Discovery process. Using various techniques to envision future work place uses to clarify their goals and values and to agree on a desired end of the project.
3. Prototyping. Designers and users iteratively shape technological artifacts to fit into what was envisioned in stage two. This involves a continual loop of eliciting feedback and integrating the feedback into the prototype.

Some examples in the literature of PD projects include: using PD to develop a Greek language course (Zaphiris, 2005), to develop websites more applicable to the elderly population (Ellis, 2000), to design more useful course websites (Niklova-Houston, 2005), to create web pages for the business community (Abels, 1998), to work with community groups to increase their capacity to use technology to solve local community problems (Merkel, 2004), to design educational applications (Triantafyllakos et.al., 2008), to design prototypes for document search and retrieval technology in a law firm (Bloomberg 1995, cited in McPhail, 1998).

The literature indicates that online communities do have strong potential to support learning communities, however, it is extremely important to design them with the eventual users of the community. Therefore, it was important for this pilot project to include a process that fostered this type of user participation. Key principles were used to help guide the design and implementation of this engagement process. These principles are outlined in the following section.

3.0 Guiding Principles

One objective of the pilot project was to bring people together with varying backgrounds and expertise for collaborative decision-making. This occurred through a series of workshops where designers and past Project Leaders had the opportunity to work together. In order to successfully design and facilitate these workshops, I relied on principles of participatory planning, community development and principles of good facilitation.

This section outlines eleven principles that guided the approach to the workshop engagement series. Section 5.0 of this report will discuss how these concepts were incorporated and their impacts on the process.

- **Transparency and Openness:** Creating a transparent process is crucial for the success of participation. According to Campbell (2006), transparency refers to people's willingness to make sure that all have the needed information to participate effectively. Being transparent about this information can lead to trust and empowerment among participants. Parker et. al (2006) has found that information and the control of its dissemination becomes a form of power over others, but valuing transparency and open access to information creates conditions of empowerment for all participants. According to British Columbia's guidelines for public participation (2008), transparent processes also ensure that those participating understand the scope of the decision process, procedures, and any constraints. It is important that participants know why they are participating, the extent of their participation, and what their participation will lead to. Being clear and transparent about the goal and extent of their participation allows participants to trust the process.
- **Inclusiveness:** Inclusivity and diversity in collaborative processes are important. A commitment to this principle means including a range of groups or individuals who may be affected by the decisions or who can make a meaningful contribution (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002, in Schuman, 2006 p.467). Inclusive processes invite participants from varying places and programs and ensure that they understand the importance of their participation. Inclusivity in processes also means using terms and language that everyone understands. In order for people to feel involved and included they must be able to understand and contribute to the process.
- **Capacity Building and Empowerment**: Building capacity among participants and empowering them to take leadership in decision-making is an important tenet of participatory process, especially in participatory design processes. According to Frank and Smith (1999), building capacity ensures that participants can assume leadership in identifying and implementing actions that promote community building.
- **Building Relationships:** For successful processes to occur, adequate time should be given to allow for the building of relationships. According to Parker et al. (2006) "good processes create a context for building relationships" (p. 332). These relationships are the foundation of trust building, and through trust, situations are created where participants can rely, learn from, and work effectively with each other.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Working together as a group to make decisions is a key principle of community development. This collaborative decision-making fosters a shared understanding of current constraints and opportunities, cultivates creative ideas, and allows for participants to be acknowledged and valued. Valuing this type of decision-making can lead to strengthened relationships and more effective outcomes. This is also a

tenet of participatory design, that both the users and the designers will be making decisions.

- **Equality**: During any participatory process, there are always power dynamics at play. Challenging these dynamics and creating space where people feel equal is very important for successful processes. This is especially crucial in PD processes as the designers, who typically hold the power, are working side-by-side with the users.
- **Reflection:** Reflection is a key aspect of any process and allows for critical assessment of situations and how actions are being played out. Building reflection into a process creates intentional thinking about what has occurred and what should occur in the future.
- **Dialogue:** Creating space for dialogue to occur is of key importance in participatory processes. Dialogue represents the act of listening and understanding versus debating and argument. It requires that participants respect each other and their viewpoints (tolerating difference), allowing for the creation of a safe place where "individuality, diversity and creativity are not repressed" (Psyer, 2005 p. 209 cited in Wong, 2006 p.238). This can lead to conversations that enable people to better understand each other.
- **Focus on Assets vs. Needs**: Focusing on assets is an important aspect of community development. McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) in their *Asset-Based Community Development* approach stress the need for a process that focuses on the assets of a community. By doing so, it becomes possible to empower people to build upon their strengths, versus focusing on their weakness. Subsequently this leads to empowerment and further ownership of processes as people recognize what they individually have to offer.
- **Learning:** Focusing on the idea of learning, both individually and as a group, is crucial for the sustainable development of a community. As stated in Section 2.0, social learning is a powerful tool. It is important that collaborative processes focus not only on reaching the tangible outcome, but also on the learning that occurs. It is through this learning that greater understanding of issues and their potential solutions become known.
- **Action:** Valuing action and being orientated towards action in a process is important. As previously stated by Friedmann (1987), action is a key component of social learning, whereby you learn from action and your experience of it. Being guided by the principle of action also pushes the process towards the creation of a tangible outcome. This is an important aspect for participants as they are able to see that their participation is leading to a product.

These eleven principles discuss some of the important aspects to include in participatory processes. This list represents the principles that were most important and played a key role in the design and implementation of the workshop engagement process. This process is described in detail in the following section.

4.0 Framework and Description of the Process

This section presents the process used in this pilot project including detailed description of what occurred at each stage.

This process built upon the three general steps for PD processes outlined in Section 2.0:

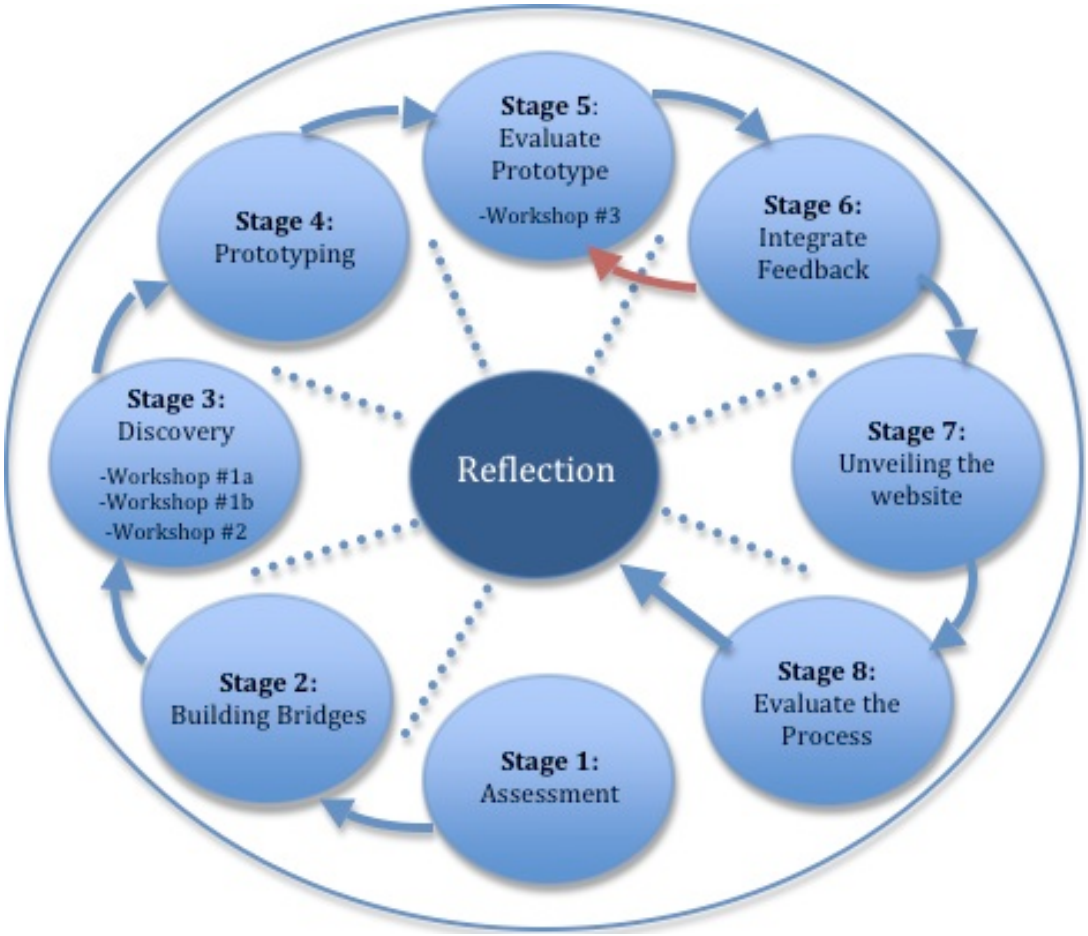
1. **Exploring users' work**: Becoming familiar with the ways in which users work, gaining the trust of participants, studying their goals, values and needs.
2. **Discovery**: Using various techniques to envision future workplace uses, to clarify their goals and values and to agree on a desired end of the project.
3. **Prototyping**: Designers and users iteratively shape technological artifacts to fit into what was envisioned in stage two. This involves a continual loop of eliciting feedback and integrating the feedback into the prototype.

'Exploration' consisted of two stages (Stage 1: Assessment and Stage 2: Building Bridges), 'Discovery' contained one stage (Stage 3: Discovery), and 'Prototyping' consisted of three stages (Stage 4: Prototyping, Stage 5: Evaluation Prototype and Stage 6: Integrate Feedback). The facilitation team (myself and the co-facilitator) also chose to add two further steps to this process (Stage 7: Unveiling the website and Stage 8: Evaluating the process).

It is important to note that the workshop engagement series of this process began at stage three (see Figure 1 below). This engagement series was designed around the above ideas of 'Discovery' and 'Prototyping' and built in the eleven guiding principles presented in Section 3.0.

The following diagram represents the stages of the entire process. The facilitators drew from the method of Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984), reflecting after each stage and designing the following stage based on those observations and what was learned.

Figure 1: Project Leader Online Community Process



Stage 1: Assessment

The first stage was a preparation period for the engagement workshops that would begin at Stage 3.

- The first phase (Phase A) involved: understanding the context of being a Project Leader, determining if creating an online community with Project Leaders was appropriate to their needs and assets; and determining their readiness to engage.
- The second phase (Phase B) included preliminary planning for the workshops.

Phase A

Understanding Context and Determining Appropriateness:

For this initial phase I drew from the first step of a typical PD process: Exploring users' work. In a PD process this step involves studying the work practices of the potential participants and becoming familiar with the issues and needs of the group. Past researchers undergoing this exploration have used methods such as ethnography and participant observation. For this phase, I used participant observation, drawing on observations from being a teaching assistant for the yearlong SCARP class, experiences as a student staff working at the UBC-CLI, and my own personal previous experiences as a Project Leader. As stated in the introduction to this report, one

reason we chose to pilot this project with the Project Leader group was that I already possessed the general knowledge of Project Leaders "work practice" and knew the mission of this group, their tasks and goals, the support and resources they had access to, the challenges and obstacles they may face, and what the overall experience was like.

The literature states that the benefits of an online learning community, or online communities of practice are:

- Increased capability to share resources (experiences, problems, solutions, tools, methods)
- Higher capacity for documentation and to store information (this can easily be searched and retrieved)
- Opportunity for equal participation due to the text-based medium
- Accessibility: available 24 hours a day
- Creation of norms of reciprocity: advice to one person can be seen by the whole group
- Increased network density and networks of relationships (social capital)
- Opportunity for collaborative learning (social learning)

From my experiences as a teaching assistant (TA), as a student staff at the UBC-CLI, and as a previous leader, Project Leaders would benefit extremely from the aforementioned points. Not only would Project Leaders have another medium to share experiences and their knowledge, but this sharing could also be documented and retrieved at any time. The experiences and lessons learned would be seen by the entire group, which promotes a more collaborative learning environment. Through this increased networks of relationships could also be made and leaders could benefit from being exposed to the entire network of Project Leaders at UBC, not just those directly in their program.

Therefore developing the shell of an online community, to support a Project Leader learning community, seemed appropriate.

Determining Readiness to Engage:

Through my various roles and involvement in CSL, I knew that a few Project Leaders used online spaces as a way to access resources and connect with each other. One of the Project Leader training programs was using an online content management system called WebCT, however, from informal conversations with the trainers of this program this had not been extremely successful. The trainers mentioned that participants found it difficult to use and not engaging.[15] Therefore because some leaders had already been using or exposed to this type of technology, I felt there was a base understanding about the potential of using online technology. As stated in the introduction, this was a key piece of information that led to the decision to pilot this project with the Project Leader group.

Phase B

The next phase in this first stage was to do some preliminary planning for the engagement process. Keeping in line with the principles and values guiding this process, I needed to clarify what participation meant for the engagement aspect of the process, and what the goals for

[15] This WebCT vista site is explored in more detail in Stage 3, Workshop 1B.

participation were. Drawing from Sanoff (2000), conceptualizing participation meant asking questions of who, what, where, how, and when:

- Who are the people to be involved in this process?
- What is the participation intended to generate?
- Where is the participation going to lead? What are the goals of participation?
- How should people be involved?
- When in the process is participation needed or desired?

In keeping my commitment to inclusiveness and to the goals of PD processes, I decided that past Project Leaders from different programs (both SCARP and CLILP[16]) should be involved (including those from past years), and that web technologists needed to be involved. The participation was intended to generate ideas, explore attitudes, and through collaborative discussion, for participants to make decisions about what components the online community was going to include and how they would be represented in the online space. In determining where the participation was going to lead, I wanted to produce participant ownership over this community and ultimately envisioned many of these Project Leaders being involved in the online community in the long term. Therefore the goals of participation were not only to generate ideas about what the community will be about, but to help them get excited and involved in the future of this community (to become Project Leader mentors, to upload new resources and so forth). In terms of how people should be involved, I decided that the best way would be for participants to come together in a series of workshops to discuss, reflect and brainstorm, and that participants would be offered the chance to give input on the agenda of the workshops and the activities. I felt that participants should be involved at the very beginning of this engagement process, continuing on until the space had been designed (and to remain part of the community if desired).

At this phase in the process it was important to have defined and written out a vision for the future engagement process and to loosely define the objectives of each of the workshops. As stated previously, the co-facilitator and myself decided to use Kolb's experiential learning model that would allow us to plan the first workshop, run it, reflect on it, then plan the next workshop based on what we learned.

The second stage in the process is Building Bridges, which revolved around inviting and creating initial relationships with potential participants in the process.

Stage 2: Building Bridges

This stage involved bringing together a design team and inviting participants to take part in the engagement process.

Creating the Design Team

An important tenet of PD processes is to involve both the designers and the users in the engagement process. Therefore, in order to create this design team, the UBC-CLI partnered with UBC's Office of Learning Technology (OLT). OLT agreed to take part in this pilot project and

[16] CLILP stands for Community Learning Initiative Leadership Program and is open to all graduate students and UBC staff who want to participate in CSL as Project Leaders. They undergo 3 days of training. Please refer to the website for more information: www.clilp.ubc.ca.

help to host and implement the design of this future online site. Therefore the design team consisted of two employees from OLT, the co-facilitator and myself. The facilitation team for the workshops consisted of myself as the main facilitator, and the co-facilitator.

As outlined in the guiding principles, the design team met before the engagement process to discuss vision, roles and responsibilities, and the commitment to equality, collaborative decision-making and learning.

Inviting participants

As outlined in my introduction, I used a purposeful sampling method to select participants. Keeping in line with the principle of inclusiveness, I wanted to invite a range of Project Leaders who led projects both in schools and community organizations, including a variety of leaders from both CLILP and SCARP, from UBC and the business community. As space was limited, the trainers from the UBC-CLI identified leaders who they thought would be interested, had time for this process, and would be a good match (i.e. nominating leaders who had technical experience, and also those who had none so that there was a balance). Because I was the TA for the SCARP class, I also identified leaders who I felt would be a good fit. These specific leaders were sent an invitation to participate (See Appendix A) from their respective trainers. The UBC-CLI felt that this was an appropriate method because the trainers who sent the invitation had a pre-established relationship with those being invited, therefore the invitation was coming from a trusted source. In total, out of the 20 past leaders that were invited, 15 past leaders agreed to take part in this workshop series.

Stage 3: Discovery

This third stage was the start of the workshop engagement process. This engagement process consisted of four workshops over seven weeks. This third stage contained three of the four workshops.

According to PD processes, the goal of the 'Discovery' stage is to use various techniques to envision future workplace uses, and to clarify goals and values. Therefore this stage was used to identify the goals, values, assets and needs of the Project Leaders. This occurred in two workshops. Methods from the PD literature helped to shape the agenda for these workshops, and they loosely followed the structure of an approach called "Futures Workshop" as described by Kensing and Madsen (1991). The "Futures Workshop" consists of three phases: critique, fantasy, and implementation. In the 'critique' phase participants critique their current work practice, 'fantasy' involves the creation of visions to address the critiques, and 'implementation' includes discussing and planning activities to realize the vision.

The first workshop focused on 'critique' and 'fantasy', while the second on 'implementation'.

Workshop 1A

This first workshop was held on March 19th, 2009, on UBC Campus. Nine past Project Leaders and two Office of Learning Technology (OLT) staff attended.

The purpose of this workshop was for participants to get to know each other, reflect on their past experiences as leaders and brainstorm ideas for the future online community.

The key activities in this workshop were as follows: opening welcome, group introductions, mini-brainstorm about online communities, reflections on past experiences as a Project Leader,

defining objectives for the online space, and a closing round. See Appendix B for the complete agenda.

Workshop Highlights

The workshop opened with a welcome session. During this I introduced myself, the co-facilitator, the two participants from OLT, and outlined why we were there. It was reiterated to the participants that they have come together to develop a future online space that will help support Project Leaders doing CSL. The purpose of their participation was outlined, that they were there to engage in a process that allows them to say what this online space should include, its purpose, and how it will accomplish that purpose. It was explained that this was the first of three workshops in this series and that throughout this process we would be working and learning together.

Next, the group engaged in a round of introductions where the participants introduced themselves, talked about what project they led, what brought them to this process, what their favorite website was, and ranked themselves on a scale of one to ten on their comfort level with the Internet. The last question provided a sense of the range of skills participants had with the Internet. Also, strategically the two participants from OLT did not rank themselves as a "10" claiming that they still had a lot to learn and that they were looking forward to learning from others during the process. This seemed to put the group at ease. There was also much laughter during this round of introductions as participants repeatedly forgot which question they were supposed to answer next. Unknowingly at the time of planning, this sparked an element of lightheartedness and a sense of fun in the session.

After introductions the group engaged in a mini brainstorm. They were asked to turn to a partner and give an example of a current successful online community and its characteristics. These ideas were then written up on a flipchart and discussed. The most commonly identified successful online community was 'Facebook' because of its purpose, layout and number of people involved.

The next two main activities corresponded to the 'critique' and 'fantasy' phases identified above. For the 'critique', participants were asked to evaluate past experiences, reflecting on processes and tools used, following with a brainstorm on helpful resources. In evaluating past experiences, they reflected on the question, "What would have been most helpful to have known at the beginning of your training?" The purpose of this question was to give the participants time to situate themselves back in their project, and identify what new Project Leaders could benefit from knowing early on in their own process. Participants individually wrote each of their ideas on coloured paper and placed them to the appropriate flip chart. These ideas were read aloud and the facilitators then grouped them into common themes.

The following themes emerged:

- An overview of the process and dates
- What support was available
- Examples of previous projects and their challenges/successes
- Expectations of project leaders and each stakeholder involved
- Roles and responsibilities of everyone involved

The second question in this 'critique' was, "What did you feel were the most helpful things to you during this process?" Again, the purpose of this question was to elicit ideas that could eventually go into this new online space. A similar method was used as participants individually wrote on coloured paper and placed their ideas up on a flipchart. These ideas were also read aloud and grouped into themes. The following themes were identified;

- Hearing stories, receiving support and feedback from other project leaders (past and current), co-mentors and instructors.
- Obtaining key resources: information about reflection, facilitation activities, the Project Leader handbook, templates, past project plans.

For the 'fantasy' phase, participants worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas for the new online space, outlining what they felt would best support future Project Leaders during their training. Each group was given a large sheet of paper and encouraged to write and draw all the ideas that surfaced. Specifically each group brainstormed around the statement, "We want this to be a space for Project Leaders to ____." Both staff from OLT joined a small group. Each group was asked to write their top five ideas on a coloured piece of construction paper, one idea per paper.

The group then reconvened and all ideas were spread on the floor as each small group talked about their ideas. These ideas were placed in clusters, and four common clusters emerged. Project Leaders need a space to:

1. Access resources and tools
    - Become a "one –stop-shop" for all resources, include searchable sharing, include reflection resources, FAQ, top 10 tips, check-lists, to-do, reflection and ice breaker questions and activities, past project tips, literature archive, archived learning (key things I learned that other people can learn from), history of past groups at my organization/school and what they did (including contact information).
2. Share ideas and experiences
    - Become a space for group reflections, building relationships, having dialogues (based on similar interests and challenges), chatting, discussing expectations and roles, validation, having the community (organizations/schools) get involved in the dialogue (sharing local knowledge), having a TA online, updating each other.
3. Link the multiple groups of different players in CSL together
    - Linking Project Leaders, organizations, and student participants together (while finding balance between group understanding and privacy).
4. Have fun and informal communication
    - Be able to upload photos, write on a blog, include fun stuff (jokes/trivia), use it to plan social events.

The workshop culminated with information about the upcoming workshop and a closing question. Participants were told that the purpose of the next workshop was to get more specific about how to integrate their ideas and lessons learned into a website. They were also informed that they would be receiving an overview of all of the ideas that came out of the workshop, which they could then comment and give their feedback on. Lastly, going around the circle, the participants were asked to comment on one thing they learned, were looking forward to, or had

concerns about. The responses from the group were very positive and ranged from those who were excited to see how the online space would turn out, to those who were happy to be helping their peers, to expressions of jealousy. One participant claimed they were jealous because they did not have this type of resource during their time as a Project Leader.

One week after this workshop, participants received an overview of what had occurred at this workshop and their key ideas. They were asked to review this document and add any comments or changes.

Workshop 1B

This workshop was held on March 26th, 2009, in Downtown Vancouver. Six past Project Leaders and one OLT staff attended.

This workshop was meant for those participants who could not attend the first session at UBC either due to time or location difficulties. Therefore, this session followed a similar agenda to Workshop 1A, including one additional activity that allowed participants to critique two websites. See Appendix C for the agenda.

Workshop Highlights

Similar to the first workshop, this session opened with an introduction and a brief overview as to why they had come together and the purpose of this engagement process. Participants then introduced themselves answering similar questions as in the first workshop. One main difference in these participants versus those who attended the first workshop at UBC was that a majority came from SAP Business Objects, a software company in Vancouver, which gave some of them a higher level of technical expertise as compared to others. When asked for examples of successful online communities and their related attributes, this group engaged in a much livelier discussion. Unlike the first workshop, these participants did not agree that 'Facebook' was the best example of a successful online community as one participant pointed out that it seemed very 'fake' and not representative of a genuine community and that it had an element of an alternate reality. The participants noted that these were attributes that they did not want in this future online space.

For the critique phase, the participants brainstormed around the two questions similar to the first workshop. For the first question, "What would have been most helpful to have known at the beginning of the process", responses were similar to those of the first workshop, with the most common being:

- What resources were available, specifically surrounding reflection
- Clearly knowing the expectations of Project Leaders
- Hearing feedback from previous Project Leaders

The second question, "What were the most helpful things to you during this process?" also revealed similar ideas. The most common themes from this group included:

- Key resources on icebreaker activities, examples of past project plans and timelines, receiving instruction on how to problem solve in difficult situations
- Other Project Leaders and training staff

The next activity in this 'critique' phase was unique to this particular workshop. During the first workshop we ran out of time, and had to cut this activity. Therefore this activity was made a

priority. For the activity participants critiqued and compared two websites. The first was the actual website that was used during their leader training (this was from the CLILP program), and the second was a website called "Techsoup.com." The facilitators chose this second website because we felt it had a clear layout and interesting components (such as forum topics, member spotlight, events calendar). The purpose of this activity was to look at the strengths and weaknesses of these two websites. The method used was taken from Foster (2008). To redesign their library website they used blow-ups of their current website and asked participants to mark it up, crossing out elements they wouldn't use, and circling things they valued. The participants followed a similar strategy; they were split into small groups, given a blow-up of both of the websites and asked to mark it up and comment on what they felt were the strengths and weaknesses of each of the websites. Participants then displayed these on the wall and we discussed what each group had come up with. The common themes that emerged are shown below in Figure 2. From this participants recognized what they did or did not want as part of the new online community.

Figure 2: Participants' Comparison of Two Websites

	Strengths	Weaknesses
CLILP (Web CT Vista)	- offered resources (ice breakers, reflection exercises, project plans) - included a forum: questions were answered by program facilitators - the initiative itself (the fact that it was there and existed)	- optional components not used (journaling) - the tool was generally introduced as optional – everyone was emailed so there was no need to go to the site - homepage is too text heavy, CLILP logo outdated, icons not useful - difficult to navigate, groupings not logical - no left hand navigation - lost passwords - could not send a direct hyperlink to resources - access is cutoff between winter and spring semester
Techsoup	- elements of fun (i.e. soup recipes) - events calendar - shows where you are and how to navigate back, includes search - right amount of top tabs, good font - RSS/email updates - standard formatting on each page	- difficult to discern purpose of site (no purpose statement or about us), too many links without hierarchy/clear purpose - visually messy (prefer tabs, differentiation) - text heavy - needs more visual appeal- bland/beige - "how to use" does not stand out

The last activity representing the 'fantasy' phase, where the group brainstormed ideas for the online space surrounding the statement, "We want this online community to be a space for Project Leaders to ____." They opted to answer this question as a large group instead of breaking into smaller groups, and I wrote down the ideas on the flip chart as they verbalized them. Similar ideas emerged as to workshop 1A. When grouped into themes it was seen that they wanted Project Leaders to have a space to:

1. Access resources/ tools:
    - Include past project plans/task lists, have this site be the single source of information and drive people to it, include school/community profiles, subscribe to different topics of discussion (receive email when someone posts a new idea), access information about past projects, profiles of organizations and schools involved.
2. Sharing ideas and experiences:
    - Be able to share experiences, ask questions, voice concerns, use as a sharing tool so Business Objects can write about why they are involved, use it as a way to communicate personal involvement (show mom, put on resume, recruitment), a place to showcase children's participation, use it as a way to sell the CSL idea to other organizations and potential project leaders, and for other actors such as faculty or community organizations to share why they are involved.
3. Informal communication:
    - Be able to post pictures, include an accurate calendar, offer social activities and sign up online), games (include a crossword).

This group also offered ideas around including specific components of the site:

- "About us" section
- "How to use" section
- Rules of engagement for the site
- Definitions page outlining the difference between CSL and volunteering, defining key acronyms such as CSL, LE, UBC-CLI.

This workshop also culminated with information about the next session and a closing round, again asking the participants to say one thing that they learned or were looking forward to. Similarly, participants were excited about the final outcome and how it was going to all come together.

One week after this workshop, participants received an overview of what they had done and their key ideas. They were asked to review it and add any comments or changes.

Workshop 2

This workshop was held on April 7th, 2009, in Downtown Vancouver. Six participants and two OLT staff attended.

The purpose of this workshop was to bring together all the participants from the first workshops (1A and 1B), revisit the key ideas, and discuss how to move forward with these ideas. Participants would also be introduced to more of the technological options for an online community.

The key activities in this workshop were as follows: welcome and recap of previous workshops, overview of the day, introductions, presentation of technology, activity to re-visit ideas and a closing activity. See Appendix D for the agenda.

Workshop Highlights

This workshop opened with a welcome, and a recap of how we got to this point. It was mentioned that this workshop was bringing participants together from workshop 1A and 1B. The flip charts that were used during both previous workshops were put up on the wall and I revisited the key ideas and clusters that came from each group. I highlighted the links between participants' responses to the questions "what would have been most helpful at the beginning of the process" and "what were most helpful" to their ideas that they devised for the online community. Participants also had the opportunity to comment on what further links they saw between their reflections on their past experiences, and what ideas they put forward for the future community.

The agenda for the day was reviewed and participants were told that this session would include discussion surrounding the technology that could potentially support our ideas. I was intentional in stating that although technology can be great, online communities are more about the people involved than the technology used, as the purpose of technology is to support their ideas in wanting to make communication among Project Leaders and access to resources easier.

During the introductions participants paired up and talked more about the previous project they led and what they felt was one successful aspect of this project and why. The participants from OLT were asked to talk about one of their previous project planning and implementation experiences. Each participant then wrote their successful aspect on a piece of coloured paper and posted it on the flipchart. We then went around the group and participants explained what they had written. I briefly talked about the importance of focusing on strengths and that while developing this community it was important to understand how their successful experiences and advice could benefit the future leaders. Participants attributed the successful aspects of their projects to:

- Being flexible in the process
- Being adaptable
- Being clear
- Forming a well-planned project idea
- Planning for the down-time during a project
- Using a variety of reflection techniques
- Collaborating with all players, and seeing how you fit in helping the school or organization reach their goals
- Ensuring fun was built into the project, having the students do fun activities that allow them to move around

The strengths and weaknesses of the two websites were briefly reviewed. Three of the participants were from workshop 1A and did not have the opportunity to do this exercise, therefore I had asked one participant from workshop 1B to give a short overview of what they had found.

The following activity included a presentation by the OLT participants regarding some of the ways technology could support the ideas from the first two workshops. They introduced the idea of a "blog", and the different possibilities for this type of technology. Projecting on the screen, they introduced five different examples of blogs outlining the purpose of each and their attributes:

- http://blogs.ubc.ca/brian/
- http://blogs.ubc.ca/parsia/
- http://digitaltattoo.ubc.ca/
- http://blogs.ubc.ca/culturepedia/
- http://www.leap.ubc.ca/

Some of the blogs were more of an information source (resembling static websites), while others contained spaces where the users had more control and could share information. In the example of the UBC Leap website, it was pointed out that this blog uniquely includes areas of information that are owned by the user with the expertise. This wide diversity of uses for blogs was new to a majority of the participants and one participant commented that they never knew blogs could be so versatile. OLT's presentation culminated with personal stories about the power of sharing online and the benefits of having strong online networks of support.

After this presentation, participants moved into small groups to revisit the ideas from the first workshops. This portion of the workshop represented the 'implementation' phase of Kensing and Madsen's (1991) 'Futures Workshop' as described previously in the introduction to stage three. The purpose of this activity was for participants to revisit the main themes brainstormed for this online community, and to focus on how these ideas would be implemented in the online community. For this activity participants looked at three of the main themes:

1. Access to resources/ tools
2. Sharing ideas and experiences
3. Informal communication

Each small group focused on one of the above topics. Using large sheets of paper, participants wrote and drew their ideas on how their topic could be implemented.

These sheets of paper were then put up on the wall and discussed. The following ideas emerged from this activity:

- Group 1: Access resources and tools:
    - Create a visual timeline with corresponding resources (such as: how to plan your project, reflection tips, facilitation tips, checklists, example project plans, roles and responsibilities)
    - Use the blog space for people to post answers about FAQ, Top 10 tips, or any other advice
    - Create a glossary so people can understand the terms used in CSL
- Group 2: To share ideas and experiences:
    - Create a space for group reflections, sharing experiences and challenges, updates on what you are doing, this could occur either through a blog or discussion board

- Ensure there are good search functions so these experiences can be easily found. Example, if you want to read all about "reflection" you would type 'reflection' in to the search and find all blog posts written and resources about reflection

- Group 3: Informal communication:
  - Create links on this website to other websites
  - Have a place for Project Leaders to be recognized. This could be done through some type of rotating member spotlight
  - Use RSS (real simple syndication) feeds so that each post is sent directly to your email
  - Include an online calendar of all project dates
  - Allow for the uploading of photos

Participants then voted on which ideas they thought were most useful, feasible and implementable for version 1.0 of this online space. Participants were given four dots to vote with. Creating the visual timeline with corresponding resources received the highest number of votes, with the next highest being for creating a space for reflections and sharing experiences. Please see Appendix E for the complete list of tasks and number of votes.

After the voting round, the participants received information about next steps. It was explained that the design team would use the ideas given and create a prototype of version 1.0 before the final workshop, and that the final workshop would be a chance to give feedback.

The session ended with a closing round where participants expressed one thing they either learned, were looking forward to, or concerned about. Some of the participants commented on their excitement about seeing the prototype, and others focused on their new understanding about technology.

One week after this workshop, all participants received an email with an overview of the workshop and the key ideas that emerged. Sending this overview was especially important because only six of the fifteen Project Leaders attended this workshop. Everyone who attended either workshop 1A or 1B received this email and had the chance to comment and give feedback.

Stage 4: Prototyping

The purpose of this stage in the process was for the design team to develop a prototype of version 1.0. After feedback was received on the emailed overview, the design team met to discuss how to incorporate participants' ideas into the design of version 1.0. The design team referred back to the outcome of the previous workshops, reviewing all of the ideas, paying close attention to the ideas in workshop two that received a high number of votes.

It was very clear from the workshops that participants wanted this to be a space for Project Leaders to access resources and share experiences, including options for uploading pictures and searching. Therefore the design team wanted to be sure that this first version gave Project Leaders the capability to do these. In terms of specific ideas that emerged from the second workshop (such as the timeline idea), a placeholder for this resource was created (i.e. a "Resources" page that would link to this timeline), but the actual timeline itself was not created.

The design team decided to use a platform called "Wordpress" to design this website shell. Wordpress is a blog publishing platform that allows anyone the opportunity to easily create a blog. It also acts as a content management system that allows for the creation of static pages that hold constant information, and more dynamic pages where users can publish their own content.

OLT currently uses Wordpress for many of their projects and the design team decided it would be best to use Wordpress and gain from OLT's expertise for this pilot Project Leader online community. The design team worked on creating this new shell and the URL of the prototype was available to participants on April 22nd/2009. Visuals of version 1.0 of the website are not available. See Stage 6, for visuals of version 2.0.

Stage 5: Evaluate the Prototype

The purpose of this stage was for participants to evaluate the prototype. Evaluating whether or not participants' ideas were translated appropriately into the design of this prototype is a very important step in Participatory Design processes. Because of the difficulty in gathering the participants for face-to-face sessions, the design team decided it was best to give the participants the option to complete an online survey about this prototype, have a face-to-face discussion, or engage in both. The facilitators created an eleven question online survey, and included a face-to-face discussion component in the third workshop.

The Online Survey

The online survey was sent to all of the participants from workshops 1A and 1B. The online survey gave participants an easy way to evaluate the prototype. The survey was designed for participants to evaluate whether version 1.0 met Project Leader needs, if it was easy to navigate and well structured, if it had appropriate functions, if it was engaging, and if the content headings were appropriate. This survey also included questions on which aspects of the website were most appealing, and which aspects required the most improvement. See Appendix F for the complete list of questions. In total, eight participants completed the online survey.

Highlights from the survey

- All respondents claimed to have had a positive reaction to the prototype
- All respondents felt that version 1.0 met their needs
- Seven respondents felt that version 1.0 had appropriate functionality
- Respondents felt the most appealing parts of the website were its visuals, the layout, and placeholders for content (i.e. the resources tab)

The results and requests on the survey were taken into consideration by the design team for version 2.0. See Appendix F for a summary of responses.

Workshop 3

This workshop was held on April 23rd, 2009, in Kitsilano, Vancouver. Three participants and one OLT staff attended.

The purpose of this workshop was to give participants an opportunity for face-to-face discussion about the prototype and to brainstorm and decide on specific content for the main areas of the website.

The key activities in this workshop were as follows: welcome and recap of previous workshops, assessing the prototype, brainstorming purpose, brainstorming content for the "Home" tab, "About Us" tab, and a closing activity. See Appendix G for the agenda.

Workshop Highlights

This final workshop opened with a discussion on the prototype. The website was projected on the screen and participants were asked similar questions to the online survey. Because of the low number of participants we discussed each question as a small group and I recorded their thoughts. Two of the participants had previously filled out the online survey, but one chose to only have a face-to-face discussion. These comments were added to the final evaluation document.

The following activity involved discussion on the overall purpose of the website. A short re-cap of the process leading up to that point was given, and participants received a handout that outlined all of the ideas for the website from the previous workshops. Participants were then asked to individually brainstorm on the following statement, "What words come to mind when thinking about describing this online community and its purpose." Each of these words were written on a colored piece of paper and stuck to a flip chart.

The following word clusters emerged:

- Communicating/sharing/exchanging/connecting
- Broadening horizons/giving back/breaking down assumptions
- Inspiration/motivation
- Learning/putting ideas into action
- Developing leadership
- Receiving and giving support/being inclusive

Using these words the participants worked as a small group to create a tag line for the community: "This is the space for Project Leaders to connect, share, learn and be inspired."

The last activity involved brainstorming ideas for the 'Home' tab and the 'About Us' tab. For this activity the original plan was to split the group into smaller groups, with each group brainstorming around one of the tabs, but because of the low number of participants the group decided to stay as one. The activity became a small group brainstorm, as participants shared their ideas and I wrote them on the flip chart. For the 'Home' tab, participants decided on the following:

1. Add a 'welcome' message at the top of Home Page and include a link for new people interested in becoming a project leader:

   "Welcome to this site. This is a place for project leaders to connect, share, learn and be inspired. New to the community? Click here to find out more about project leaders…"

   - This "new to the community" link would lead to information about what a project leader is, how to get involved, examples of past projects, and key quotes from past leaders.

2. Add the following questions to the Home Page:

- What is my role as a Project Leader?
  - This would outline roles and responsibilities of Project Leaders and other groups
- How do I plan my project?

- The eventual timeline would go here as well as example project plans, checklists, links to past projects, facilitation techniques, and reflection resources

- Where do I find support?
  - This section would hold links to the frequently asked questions (FAQ), to the resources tab, to the dialogue tab, to the community moderator, and to the UBC-Learning Exchange website and staff and training program facilitators

For the 'About Us' tab, these participants decided that it should include:

- History of CSL at UBC
- History of CSL in general
- History of the Project Leader Online Community and how it was designed
- What you can do on this website

During the closing activity I outlined the next steps and offered the idea for participants to become 'Online mentors' for this website. This would allow them to seed the website with their experiences. Two of the three participants agreed to be an online mentor.

I thanked the participants for their time and dedication and informed them about the possible idea of hosting an unofficial 'unveiling' of this website, and participants thought that this would be a good idea and exciting for the UBC Learning Exchange to see all their hard work.

Stage 6: Integrate Feedback

The comments from both the online survey and the face-to-face feedback from workshop three were compiled into a document. This document was emailed to the participants for any remaining feedback. The design team then analyzed the comments and discussed what was feasible to add and change for version 2.0 of the online community.

Version 2.0 included: a 'Home' tab including a welcome and the three questions from the ideas in workshop three; an 'About Us tab' including a history of CSL at UBC and outlining how the website was built; a 'How To' tab showing participants how to join the community and post to the blog; a 'Dialogue' tab holding all the blog postings; a 'Resources' tab linking to resources on reflection, facilitation, past project plans, and descriptions of past projects; 'Current Projects' tab showcasing the projects that are currently happening; 'Project Leader Profiles' tab (which replaced the previous 'Project Leader Spotlight' tab that was recommended in the feedback) holding all the profiles of current Project Leaders; and a 'Glossary' tab explaining acronyms (which was recommended in the feedback).

Below is a snapshot of the header of version 2.0:

Figure 3: Header of Version 2.0

Image taken March 2009

Version 2.0 and its components will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.0

**Note: Stage 5 and 6 are in a continuous feedback loop. Although time was only allotted to evaluate version 1.0 of the site and implement this into version 2.0, similar processes could continue for version 3.0, 4.0 and so forth. This would help ensure continual involvement of the participants.

Stage 7: Unveil the website

This unveiling was held on May 7th at UBC. At this stage in the process, the design team felt it was important to have an unofficial unveiling of this Project Leader online community to properly bring this process to a close and to celebrate the achievements. This was especially important for my partner in this project, the UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI, to be exposed to all of the hard work the participants had been doing.

The unveiling was used to inform people about the background and vision of the pilot project, to demonstrate version 2.0 of the website, and to talk about next steps. OLT also talked about their involvement, and one of the participants in the process talked about her experiences.

The participant from OLT mentioned that they were thrilled to be part of such a unique process to create a website, and that they learned immensely from both the process and the participants involved. The participant who spoke about her experiences during the process gave a general overview of the three workshops and talked about what surprised her most about this process. Below is an excerpt from her speech:

> "One thing that surprised me, and other Project Leaders have expressed similar thoughts, was how much we actually were able to contribute to the process! Being far from a tech expert, I wondered how I could be of much use in the development of an online community that Project Leaders could be proud of. What I found as we went through the design process was that the strength of pulling in this group of Project Leaders was that while we weren't tech experts, we were expert users, having been through the experience that future Project Leaders accessing the site can look forward to. So I hope that visitors to the site find it welcoming, easy to use, helpful, and inspiring, and that they continue to contribute to its development in years to come."

Stage 8: Evaluate the Process

During this stage participants evaluated the overall eight-week workshop engagement process. This occurred at the end of May. In stage three participants had the opportunity to evaluate the prototype stating whether it reflected the ideas put forward, but they had yet to evaluate the process used to achieve the outcome. The method used to receive feedback was an online survey, and because this was an evaluation of the entire eight-week process only those participants who had attended two or more of the workshops completed the survey. In total, eight participants fit into this category and completed the survey at the end of May. Unfortunately this meant that those participants who only attended the first workshop were not given a chance to give feedback, as a continuous formal evaluation was not built into the process. These evaluation concerns will be further discussed in Section 5.0.

The criteria used in this evaluation were developed through a collaborative effort between two of the participants and myself. It assessed:

- Participants' overall impression of the process
- Participants' learnings
- Logistics of the process
- Facilitation
- Outcomes
- Participants' recommendations for future processes

For the complete survey questionnaire, see Appendix H.

The two participants from OLT also had an opportunity to evaluate the process and each participant responded in writing about:

- General thoughts on the process (its effectiveness, their satisfaction with being involved, the best aspect of the process for them, their most important learning)
- General thoughts on logistics (amount of workshops, relevant stakeholder involvement)
- General recommendations for future processes

For the list of specific questions given to OLT, see Appendix I.

Highlights of Evaluation Findings[17]

Overall, the Project Leader participants were happy with the process, found it engaging, fun, and enjoyed the opportunity to work with other Project Leaders and with OLT. All eight respondents claimed that they learned something about technology during this process. In terms of logistics the respondents felt the workshops were well planned and that the activities done during the workshops were beneficial to the outcome. They felt that the facilitators valued their feedback and ensured positive group dynamics and created safe spaces to express thoughts. As for outcomes, seven out of eight respondents agreed that the website reflected the process. As for

[17] Detailed findings will be discussed in Section 5.0

recommendations, they would have liked a more diverse group of project leaders involved and more commitment and buy-in from all participants. For an overview of responses, see Appendix H.

The OLT participants were very enthusiastic and excited about the process. They found the process effective and were both very satisfied with their involvement. One participant highlighted that this will change the way they approach these projects in the future. They both thought the activities done during the workshops benefitted the outcome and one participant mentioned that they "are keen to see how this resource supports the future work of CSL."

These eight stages then culminated with my own personal reflections on the process and the writing of this report.

5.0 Discussion of the Process and the Outcome

The following section discusses the benefits of using the participatory design approach, how the eleven guiding principles unfolded, and the main challenges and limitations of the process. It culminates with a discussion of the website that was created and its potential to achieve the benefits of online communities (Section 2.0).

This section also includes participants' comments from the final evaluation of the process (Stage eight).

5.1 Using a Participatory Design Approach

Section 2.0 highlights that a participatory design process is a unique way of approaching the design and development of technology in that it advocates for active involvement of both the users and the designers in the process. From the results of participants' final evaluation on the process, it was seen that this approach to designing the online site was greatly valued. One participant commented that the best aspect of this process was its "collaborative approach to identifying priorities", while another participant noted, "If it would have been just one person developing the website it may not have been as comprehensive." When asked whether or not this participatory process benefitted the project, one participant claimed, "I feel that [the process] made the end product more cohesive and truly representative of what Project Leaders need/want in a website." The OLT participants, in their final evaluation also stated that they valued the approach claiming that, "The process was extremely effective for reaching the goal of a community driven project leader website."

This approach also allowed participants to feel engaged and empowered. One participant noted, "Being engaged, involved and contributing was the most important outcome of this process." Another participant stated that "the continued connection with the project" was the best aspect. For one particular participant, throughout her continual connection to the project she was able to see the expertise that she possessed. She claimed, "It was empowering to feel like I could contribute to something like a website when I don't feel that it is an area of expertise for me." Other participants expressed this sentiment as well, as they came to understand that although they may not necessarily be experts in technology, they are expert "users", expert Project Leaders, and their contributions were essential to the project.

Involving OLT in this process was seen as a major strength especially as this working relationship between the users and designers is a pivotal tenet of participatory design. When participants were asked whether involving OLT benefitted the process, 100% of the participants agreed, with seven out of eight strongly agreeing. One participant said, "I felt it was valuable to have the people actually building the site hear what we were saying we wanted. That made it feel like our ideas were in a safe place and not as open to interpretation or summarizing." One participant commented that their involvement was important because, "Knowing that this process had their support was great for us participants too. We felt we weren't just doing this in isolation from the rest of the "university system" but there was backing and support from various actors." Another participant commented that OLT's involvement was absolutely necessary, as it gave scope and clear boundaries to what could actually be produced. One participant said, "It added a degree of realism, they could tell us what was actually possible for the website" and similarly another participant commented, "Otherwise we would have been shooting blindly. It was important to look at them after saying our ideas to ask, is that even possible?"

Involving OLT in the process not only ensured that participants' ideas were heard, but provided a greater opportunity for learning to take place. The feedback surrounding OLT's blog presentation from the second workshop was very positive. According to the final evaluation one of the greatest learnings during this process surrounded technology (100% of participants claimed they learned something new about technology). Many participants specifically commented that OLT opened them up to the possibilities and versatility of blogs.

5.2 Incorporating the Guiding Principles

This section outlines how the eleven guiding principles were incorporated and discusses their impact on the workshop engagement process.

5.2.1 Transparency and Openness

In order to create a transparent and open process, as the main facilitator I was required to be transparent with information surrounding the goals of participation and what participants' participation would lead to. It was crucial that this information was articulated clearly. At the start of the workshop process I was intentional in taking time to explain the purpose of participation, the scope of the decision-making power, and to outline the steps of the process. By doing so, participants were able to see the big picture of the project and understand what would come of their participation. After each workshop I also distributed a summary of the session outcomes back to the participants. Here they had the opportunity to add or comment on these ideas as well as give further feedback and suggestions. Participants also had the opportunity to comment on each of the workshop agendas, as these were sent out several days prior to each workshop.

From the final evaluation participants seemed to value this principle. Specifically one participant wrote about the facilitators, "[They] did a great job of follow-up and communication with everyone throughout the process." One specific question on the final evaluation asked if participants agreed that the facilitators valued participant feedback into the process and if they felt that they could express their feedback at any time. Seven out of eight respondents agreed that they did, with five out of seven strongly agreeing.

One participant specifically commented that they valued knowing what the process was, and that the best aspect was, "The organization of the process and breaking it down into manageable chunks so that you felt you were accomplishing something."

5.2.2 Inclusiveness

To follow this second guiding principle of inclusiveness, a range of past Project Leaders were invited to participate (see Section 4, Stage 2), as well as web technology staff. This allowed Project Leaders to meet and work with those from different programs. Two participants highlighted this as the most valuable part of this process. One participant commented that, "Being able to converse with people with different experiences was the best aspect", and the other, "Hearing from a variety of project leaders, i.e. UBC staff, Business Objects staff, and SCARP leaders was the best aspect." Inviting web technology staff to participate was also very important to this process and the impact of that is highlighted in Section 5.1.

However, it is important to note that the method used to invite participants was not fully inclusive. As stated in Section 4, Stage 2, participants were nominated by their respective trainers to take part in this process. This was a limitation to the process and will be further discussed in the section 5.3.

Inclusivity also meant being committed to using language and generating dialogue on topics that everyone could understand. Typically with projects of this nature it is common to want to immediately focus the process and dialogue strictly around technology. Yet, in this process many participants did not have a background in web technology or understand web related technical jargon. Therefore the initial sessions were planned to focus discussion on their experiences as Project Leaders, with deliberate omission of any vast discussion surrounding technology. It was only in workshop two that technological options were introduced, and furthermore, they were introduced in a non-threatening way by OLT who were sensitive to the importance of introducing these concepts with clear and simple explanations. In order to ensure this, OLT and I met before the workshop process to discuss the importance of everyone contributing, and made an agreement not to jump into technology solutions too quickly.

Comments on the final evaluation portray that this commitment to inclusive dialogue was valued. As highlighted in Section 5.1, one participant felt empowered because they could contribute to this project when they didn't feel it was an area of expertise for them. This participant may not have felt this way about their experience if the process had mainly focused on technology and used technical jargon. The success of OLT's dedication to using clear, understandable language is also emphasized in the final evaluation, as participants thoroughly enjoyed and felt they learned a lot from the presentation on technology. Two specific comments said, " I learned about the versatility of blogs, fascinating!" and "Really enjoyed the blog presentation." One OLT participant claimed that putting technology second was the best aspect of being involved in this process as it "allowed the technology piece to take the relatively minor, supporting role that it is supposed to take." They mentioned, "This was a different way of working than I'm used to, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to grow." The other OLT participant stated that,

> "I was honored to be part of this process because I feel this kind of project is something that matters… the technology is the small, less important stuff and I felt lucky to be part of the crucial face-to-face discussions about needs and expectations."

5.2.3 Capacity Building and Empowerment

The guiding principle of capacity building and empowerment was incorporated into this process mainly by the design team valuing the knowledge, skills and experiences of all participants, and ensuring that they were part of decisions made during the process. In committing to capacity building, I personally made a conscious effort to ensure that participants knew how valuable their experiences and opinions were. A majority of the activities done in the workshops used and built upon their own experiences, which were then used to create the online space. It was constantly reiterated throughout the process that they were the "expert" and each workshop used and built upon participants' ideas and suggestions. As noted in the aforementioned sections, one participant specifically expressed feeling empowered by this process.

5.2.4 Building Relationships

Adhering to the principle of building relationships meant allowing time during the workshops for participants to adequately introduce themselves, share their previous experiences about being Project Leaders, share advice and knowledge, and work together in groups to brainstorm ideas. Relationship building was especially important in this process as participants were coming

together from different programs. The final evaluation highlighted that these participants valued getting to know each other and working together. As stated above, under the principle of inclusiveness, one participant claimed, "The best part of the process was being able to converse with people with different experiences."

Being committed to relationship building also contributed to the development of social capital. Through working together, some level of network strength and trust among participants was created. Although there might not have been adequate time during the process for participants to develop deep relationships and strong networks, I believe that "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973) were formed. These weak ties were a product of participants exchanging stories are working towards a common goal. At times throughout the workshop process I observed participants exchanging business cards and contact information.

This principle, although valued, was not given adequate attention during this process. Unfortunately timing interfered with the opportunity to fully explore and build strong relationships. This issue will be further addressed below.

5.2.5 Collaborative Decision-Making

Being committed to collaborative decision-making meant ensuring participants understood the context of the situation (the current constraints and opportunities) and what decision-making power they had. This also meant that participants worked together to decide on which ideas to implement. The first workshop gave the participants time to reflect on what they felt the constraints were in the training they received (questions surrounding what they wished they would have known at the beginning of the their training) and how this information could lead to opportunities for this online space. As seen from Section 4, Stage 3, they spent time in the first workshop working together in small groups deciding on the key ideas they would like to see implemented in this online space. These ideas were further explored in the second workshop and participants had the opportunity to vote on which ideas they felt were the most important. The design team then used this list when designing the first prototype of the online space, and took into consideration the ideas that were most popular but also most feasible for version 1.0. During the second workshop participants also engaged in a discussion about whether or not the online community should be open to the public or closed, which they decided that it should be open. When creating version 2.0, the design team took the suggestions from the prototype evaluations and decided on which were feasible to implement.

It is important to recognize that the actual decision-making power that participants held in this process was somewhat limited, as it was the design team who made the final decisions about which elements to include in the online community. This will be further discussed in the challenges section below.

5.2.6 Equality

The principle of equality, as stated in Section 3.0, is about challenging power dynamics and creating space where people can feel equal. It was essential to include this particular principle in this process because participants came from a range of technological backgrounds, and the web technologists could easily be seen as the experts.

Therefore, it was not enough to only bring together the designers and the users to the table, but it was crucial to ensure an atmosphere of shared power. The concept of shared power is complex, and the design team focused on the importance of OLT not positioning themselves as the experts. As mentioned above in the principle of inclusiveness, OLT and I met previous to the

start of the workshops to discuss the importance of creating this dynamic and the strategies to be used. It was decided that technology would not be the central focus, and that OLT would play the role of mutual learner versus expert.

During the introductions in the first workshops, the OLT participants made it very clear that they were here to learn from all the participants and to work together as equals. It was also stated many times during the opening welcome that this project was not about the technology, but instead about drawing from their experience and expertise as Project Leaders. This helped to remove the underlying concern that this was strictly a technology project, and that technical expertise was needed to participate.

This dynamic played out several times over the workshop series specifically during the small group brainstorming sessions. Participants were often split into small groups and a participant from OLT would each join a group. Here it was very evident that participants did not look to OLT for the "right" answers. From my observations, often it was the Project Leader participants taking the lead with these discussions and sharing their ideas with the rest of the group. Even when the discussion became slightly more technical in the second workshop, it was still evident that OLT was taking a back seat and emphasized listening to and learning from participants' contributions. The benefits of this were seen on the final evaluations, as one OLT participant said that their most important learning was, "Even when a group of users are unfamiliar with a technology, they can still make a meaningful design contribution if they are consulted properly." Also, on the final evaluation 100% of participants said that they felt their ideas were heard and valued. Participants were also asked if they thought their participation made a contribution to the outcome, six out of eight agreed that it did, with three strongly agreeing. Two participants chose neutral, and one commented that they wished they could have participated in the third workshop, but that they had previous commitments.

A further discussion of the challenges of power and its impact on the process is discussed below.

5.2.7 Reflection

Valuing the guiding principle of reflection meant incorporating time during the process for participants and the facilitators to use reflection. Specifically reflection was used as a tool to have participants think about their past experiences as Project Leaders, reflect on what they thought they did well as leaders, and brainstorm on what they would have liked to know. They also used reflection during both of the formal evaluations, first on the prototype, and second about the process. Reflection was also an important tool used in the design of this process, as the co-facilitator and myself met after each session, reflected on the session, the success of the activities being used, the facilitation style, and group dynamics. It was from these reflections, that the next workshop session was designed. For example, during the debrief session of workshop 1A, we discussed each activity, reflected on what went well and decided what to change. We found that groups of three worked best for small group brainstorming, and that participants needed more time to reflect on their past project and share with the group. We also found that timing was tight as there was not enough time to complete all the planned activities. Therefore we planned the next workshop to focus on the activity that was missed and to add more time for the other activities.

5.2.8 Dialogue

To incorporate the principle of dialogue in this process, which encourages listening and understanding as opposed to debate, the workshops included many activities where participants worked together and then discussed their thoughts with the larger group. Often in collaborative processes, when the topic for discussion is contentious it is necessary to set ground rules to encourage this type of dialogue. Yet because the topic for discussion was not particularly controversial, it did not seem appropriate to do this. Instead, the facilitators chose to model this act of listening and respect, making a point to value all ideas and respecting people's experiences. The golden rule of 'no idea is a bad idea' was used and all ideas were given attention to and discussed. Also, different mediums were used to provoke dialogue, as participants were encouraged to draw and be creative during brainstorming sessions.

I believe this process was successful at achieving dialogue, as throughout the process there were no instances of put-downs or negative comments about another participants' ideas. Instead participants would often say, "That's good idea" or "I didn't think of that." One comment on the final evaluation reflects this commitment to having participants work together and listen to each other: "The way it was organized to encourage dialogue was really effective in getting everyone chatting about their experiences and perspectives." It was through dialogue that participants learned and reflected upon their experiences of being a Project Leader, and one participant said, "It also made me value my experience as a Project Leader with CSL that much more because I had the opportunity to reflect on my experience after an absence." This dialogue allowed participants to explore past experiences, opinions, methods, and further allowed them to discuss new topics such as technology and how to create successful, engaging support spaces. Through this they collaboratively designed the shell of an online community, which can be seen as a product of Sanoff's (2005) 'collective intelligence' where through dialogue participants worked together to align their individual intelligences.

5.2.9 Focus on Assets vs. Needs

To incorporate this principle, this required using language that did not strictly focus on "needs." It was outlined early in the process that the reason to develop this online community was not because of the needs of Project Leaders but because Project Leaders have numerous talents and skills that have great potential to be mobilized through this space. Through these workshops participants also answered questions that focused on their assets, specifically on what they thought they did exceptionally well as leaders.

From the workshop sessions participants made it clear that they wanted this online space to be one where Project Leaders could talk about their experiences and pass along tips and advice.

This principle could have been given more attention during the process. By doing so it could have generated further participant ownership of the process and the online site. This will be discussed in more detail below.

5.2.10 Learning

It was important for this process to incorporate the principle of learning. As stated in Section 2.0, social learning is a powerful tool. This process was not only about reaching a tangible outcome (the website), but also having the participants learn from each other and about new technology. Therefore, the focus of this process revolved not only around acquiring ideas for this online space, but promoting and building in time during the process to allow for collaborative

learning to occur. This was highlighted in the final evaluation as one participant noted, "Many brains and multiple iterations allowed lots of synergy, building on preliminary ideas, tweaking the outcome as it evolved." This particular example can be seen as a process of learning in action (Friedmann, 1987), which is an underlying concept of social learning.

The final evaluation asked participants to evaluate what they thought their learning was from this process. The eight Project Leader respondents were asked to choose ideas that applied to them from a pre-set list and to write what they felt their most important learning was. From the pre-set options the following were chosen:

- Two participants said that they learned something about themselves;
- All eight participants said they learned about technology;
- Three said they learned about different processes;
- Four learned more about Project Leaders;
- Five said they learned something about different departments at UBC.

The specific learning ranged from learning about how to make a process engaging and the importance of feeling ownership over a process, to learning about other project leaders at UBC, to learning more about CSL projects and the relationships that are involved, to learning about technology and Internet tools.

OLT was also asked to state their important learning and for them, their learning revolved around processes that encourage collaborative development, learning more about CSL and as quoted above, and learning that a group of users can make a meaningful contribution to a design project.

5.2.11 Action

Being guided by the principle of action required creating a process where each of the workshops built upon each other, allowing for increased momentum and movement towards the ultimate goal of designing the web site shell. This tangible outcome, as a result of taking action on ideas, also allowed participants an opportunity to reflect upon this action. This occurred twice: once in the evaluation of the prototype, and once in the evaluation of the process. It was seen in the final evaluation that participants valued this push for action. One participant said that the best aspect of the process was, "Being able to see tangible results (i.e. the website)."

5.3 Challenges and Limitations:

As identified in the introduction to this report, there were limitations and challenges during this process. The challenges that I will highlight in this section include:

- The high rate of attrition and the potential reasons
- The balance of power and how this impacted the process
- The lack of consistent formal evaluation

5.3.1 High Attrition rate

The first notable challenge in this process was the high rate of attrition that occurred. Workshop #1 had 15 participants total (Workshop #1A had nine participants, Workshop #1B had

six participants), Workshop #2 had six participants, and Workshop #3 had only four. Therefore, the last two workshops did not receive as much input and participation as hoped for.

The reasons for this could include timing, lack of a breadth of participation options, and too much control by the facilitators.

From the final evaluation many participants noted that the timing of the workshop process was challenging. This workshop process ran in eight weeks, which left a short time in between each of the separate workshops. I chose to use this particular timing because it fit well with the time frame for this graduate project, and the UBC-CLI wanted to implement this online community for the start of the 2009-2010 academic year. It was anticipated that a short process would entice more participation by being sensitive to the length of commitment needed. Participants were also told they could still attend the first workshop even if they might not be able to commit to the other two workshops. The facilitators chose to do this because they wanted to be flexible with people's time.

Unfortunately, this tight timing caused problems for both the participants and the facilitators. For the participants, there were both scheduling and location conflicts. Participants were out of town or unable to make the workshop dates because of previous commitments or last minute conflicts. I received five last minute dropouts on the morning of workshop two because of the latter. Specific comments on the final evaluation imply that timing was part of the reason for this drop out rate: "I was disappointed I couldn't see it through to the end but I got too busy" and, "I wished I could have participated in the 3rd session as well, but I was away at the time" and, "Unfortunate timing but these things are sometimes hard to control." The final evaluation also highlights that participants would have preferred a larger group at both the second and third workshops. When asked what they thought could be improved in this process, three of the eight respondents talked about including more people and ensuring a majority of the participants could make the workshop dates and continue with the process until the end. For the facilitators, this high drop out rate presented a problem for the continuity and flow of the process, as well as keeping a sense of commitment from participants. It also affected the participants who were committed to the process, as one participant wrote on the final evaluation, "Sometimes I felt like others were less engaged/committed to the process than I was, which was discouraging." Allowing for more time and notice between sessions might have ensured more consistent attendance and commitment from all the participants.

Offering participants a variety of participation options rather than only face-to-face, three-hour workshops, might also have also led to longer participant buy-in. The idea of offering a breadth of participation options is based around the concept of broad versus deep engagement (Verlaan, 2009). Vince Verlaan, the CEO of a local Vancouver planning agency HBLanarc states that participatory processes are not a 'one size fits all' and that not all participants can participate on the same level due to differing circumstances such as time and motivation. Therefore, this requires giving participants options of engagement, which can either be broad or deep. Broad engagement involves engaging with participants on a more surface level such as having them answer a survey or having brief conversations. Whereas a deep engagement would involve participants on a deeper level such as having them come together to develop purpose and content. Including these options would allow participants then to choose their own level of engagement.

Lastly, another factor that may have attributed to the high attrition rate was the control that the facilitators possessed in this process. This control may have led to decreasing participants' commitment to the process. This is further discussed below.

5.3.2 Balancing Power Relations

This next challenge is one that I believe all facilitators in participatory processes must grapple with: How to balance the facilitator's power and control in the process while still being committed to participatory process and participant ownership.

During this process certain factors may have lessened the participatory nature of this project:

- The process was not open to all past Project Leaders, which represents a bias
- The workshop engagement process began with a pre-set agenda and decisions were made before asking for participants' participation
- The design team had the final decision making power over what ideas to implement
- The role of the facilitation team

As stated in the introduction, one limitation of this process was that it was not open to all past Project Leaders. The UBC Learning Exchange/UBC-CLI felt the process would get more response if personal invitations were only sent to those recommended by their trainers. Because leader training had just finished, the UBC-CLI wanted to be sensitive to burnout and felt that not all leaders would want to participate. Also, because this process was in workshop format there was limited space available. Therefore this project was not entirely inclusive and participatory, and the ideas generated for this online community may not be representative of the larger Project Leader community. One specific comment on the final evaluation was a recommendation for "having a more diverse group of project leaders be involved."

Another limitation to participation was that participants were brought into the process at stage three. The challenge with starting the collaborative development at this stage is that the process began with a pre-set agenda of what was going to be created, i.e. an online community. This did not necessarily allow participants to be involved from the earliest stages of conception, which is a tenet of participatory design. Other PD projects from the literature emphasized having the users and designers decide together what the technology outcome will be, resulting in the first stage of the process including more participation. However, because of time constraints, the context of this project (having already decided with the UBC-CLI to specifically use online spaces as a method to strengthen networks), and my previous history of being a Project Leader, I felt an online community was an appropriate technological outcome, and because of this, felt that participants were brought in at an appropriate time. The issue with this decision is that it led to a process that was not entirely participatory and potentially affected user ownership over this process. During this project there was tension between wanting the process to be as participatory as possible, while still possessing clear direction and vision. Finding a balance between these two concepts is necessary but challenging.

The next challenge speaks directly to the difficulty of true collaborative decision-making in a technology project. There was a seeming contradiction throughout this process of not wanting the design team to be seen as 'experts', but in fact needing this expert role to make the final decisions about what ideas were included in the online community and what would be left out, for the simple reason that they held this expertise. The actual collaborative decision making between the users and the designers could only extend so far. After the second workshop the design team had a good sense about the ideas the participants valued, but it then became an issue of which of these ideas were actually implementable in the time frame allotted. When it comes to technology projects, having end users make these final decisions is particularly tricky. For this to occur there would have needed to be some level of participant expertise, and more time and dedication from

participants. Unfortunately there was not enough time left in workshop two to look at the ideas that were ranked the highest and to discuss the feasibility of them for version 1.0. Therefore to mitigate this decision-making power the design team held, it was important that participants evaluated the prototype created to ensure that their ideas were translated appropriately. From the evaluation of the prototype, 100% of respondents said that this first version of the online community met their needs, which the design team took as confirmation that participants felt their ideas had been translated accurately into the online medium.

The role of the facilitator in a participatory process is very important, but, as stated previously, there is tension between the control a facilitator possesses and how much of that control is handed over to the participants. As the facilitator, handing over the control in a participatory process is crucial. Robert Chambers (2002) highlights some key "do's" and "don'ts" for behaviour in participatory workshops. He talks about the importance of facilitators to "hand over the stick" literally meaning handing over the pen/sharpie, or metaphorically transferring authority and initiative (p.132). I realize now that I could have been more intentional in doing this. As the facilitator I tended to hold the pen during large group discussions and dictate what was being written. Two specific comments on the final evaluation support this. One participant said that they wanted the facilitators to remain more in the background during the process, and the second participant wished the facilitators had "stayed farther back" during the workshops. This would have required that we as the facilitators take a step back, trust the process and hand over control. I realize that during these workshops I would sometimes act as a facilitator and sometimes as a participant. In participatory processes there is a grey line between being a facilitator and being a participant in your own process, which, unless clearly outlined to the group that this is occurring, can cause confusion and be seen as another way of facilitators controlling the process. I found that because of my prior experience as a Project Leader, and my passion for the topic, I often wanted to jump in and be involved in the activities. In the end, because this switching of roles was not made clear, it may have impacted participant ownership during the workshops.

Another point of tension for the facilitators in this process was between wanting to be flexible in the process but adhering to the timeline. As it stood, there was not enough time during the individual workshops to complete all of the planned activities, which left no time for more organic, participant-driven discussions. By not having enough time for this to occur, opportunities may have been missed to discuss other themes and ideas that were important to the participants. In my own personal reflections on this process I realize that this short timeline also did not leave adequate time for relationship building among participants or to fully explore their assets and what each participant could bring to this online community. Focusing on these two topics might also have allowed for more participant ownership of the process and lowered the attrition rate.

In general, I realize that I could have been more proactive in transferring my authority and giving the participants more control over the process. This has led me to understand the importance of reflecting on your own position of power as a facilitator, and how you can use these workshop sessions to empower others. In words of Chambers (ibid), "We need to learn to talk less, to dominate less, to control less…'walk the non-talk', to shut up and to empower and trust others" (p. 132).

5.3.3 Lack of Consistent Formal Evaluation

The last challenge was the lack of formal evaluation throughout the process. This process included two evaluations: the prototype that was developed, and the final evaluation of the whole process. The challenge with only having two formal evaluations is that there was no consistent feedback after each workshop. When participants were emailed the workshop summary they were asked for their feedback on the attached document, but not necessarily on the workshops. This was an error made on part of the facilitation team. When it came to do an evaluation on the final process I only asked those who had attended two or more of the workshops to respond, as they would have had the most knowledge about the whole "process." This meant missing out on valuable feedback from those participants that only attended one of the workshops. If the facilitation team had done formative evaluations, more feedback and data could have been captured and incorporated into the process. This might have also given more insight into the attrition rate.

Another limitation was that the specific evaluation criteria were not developed in collaboration with all of the participants at the beginning of the workshop process. It was in fact only developed with two participants at the end of the process. Having all participants take part in designing the evaluation criteria would have provided an excellent opportunity to further build capacity and ownership among the participants (IRDC, 2005). When evaluating the process, I struggled with how to measure whether the participants found the process "successful", and I realized that by creating the evaluation criteria together, we could have given ourselves measurable targets that all the participants could have agreed on and been aware of. This would have also ensured that this aspect of the process was participatory.

5.4 Discussion of the Outcome

The central goal of this project was to design and implement a process that would lead to a collaboratively designed online space to support Project Leaders involved in Community Service-Learning at UBC. The outcome of this process was a website shell that would allow Project Leaders to connect, share stories, access resources and support each other throughout their time of being a leader. It is intended that this space will become a beneficial resource, fostering a learning community that promotes social capital creation and allows for continuous social learning opportunities.

5.4.1 Version 2.0

From the workshop process the central ideas that participants wanted for this online space were: to access resources and tools, to connect, share ideas and experiences, and to have fun and be an informal communication tool.

Version 2.0 was created to include the following architecture and capabilities (See Figure 4, below).

The eight "Tabs" at the top of the online community:

1. **Home**: This is the first page that users will see when they go to this online community. It welcomes all the Project Leaders at UBC, states the purpose of the community, offers a link to more information about Project Leaders, offers a link to the "About Us" tab and the Glossary, helps Project Leaders get started by outlining their role, how to plan their project, and where they can find support.

2. **About Us**: This page will tell the history of CSL at UBC, history of CSL in general, history of this online community and how it was designed, and will outline what users can do in this online community.
3. **How to**: This page will include instructions on how to join the online community and how to post on the blog.
4. **Dialogue**: All the blog posts written by Project Leaders will go on this page. These posts will be categorized so as to ensure organization and to allows users to easily find the information they are looking for. For example, all the posts written about reflection will be categorized under 'Reflection'.
5. **Resources:** From the second workshop, participants decided what resources they thought were most important to include in this site. This page will hold all these important resources, such as facilitation tips, FAQ's, important CSL websites, a literature archive, past CSL projects, reflection tips and activities, safety guidelines, sample project plans and Top 10 tips for Project Leaders.
6. **Current Projects**: This page will outline the current projects that Project Leaders are involved in.
7. **Project Leader Profiles:** This page will contain all the profiles of the members on this site. It will also contain a member spotlight, and past videos of projects.
8. **Glossary:** This page will explain acronyms such as CSL, CLI and SCARP.

The left column:

1. **Welcome!** This box outlines the community moderator. There are links to her email and a quick link about how to join the community.
2. **Dialogue Categories**: This box shows the main dialogue categories. As stated previously users can categorize each of their blog posts and the categories will be displayed here.
3. **Recent Dialogue:** This box includes the most recent posts from the dialogue tab.
4. **Comments**: This box includes the most recent comments on posts from the dialogue tab.
5. **Reading Week 2009 Photos**: This box includes rotating photos from 2009 CSL projects.

The right column:

1. **Search:** This search box allows users to type in any key word and it will retrieve all the posts that include that word.
2. **Content:** This box gives an overview of all the content that is in each tab.
3. **Project Leader Spotlight:** This box contains the Project Leader Spotlight. This currently highlights a Project Leader from 2008, but will be rotating to highlight a new Project Leader every month.

Figure 4: Homepage of Version 2.0 of the Project Leader Online Community

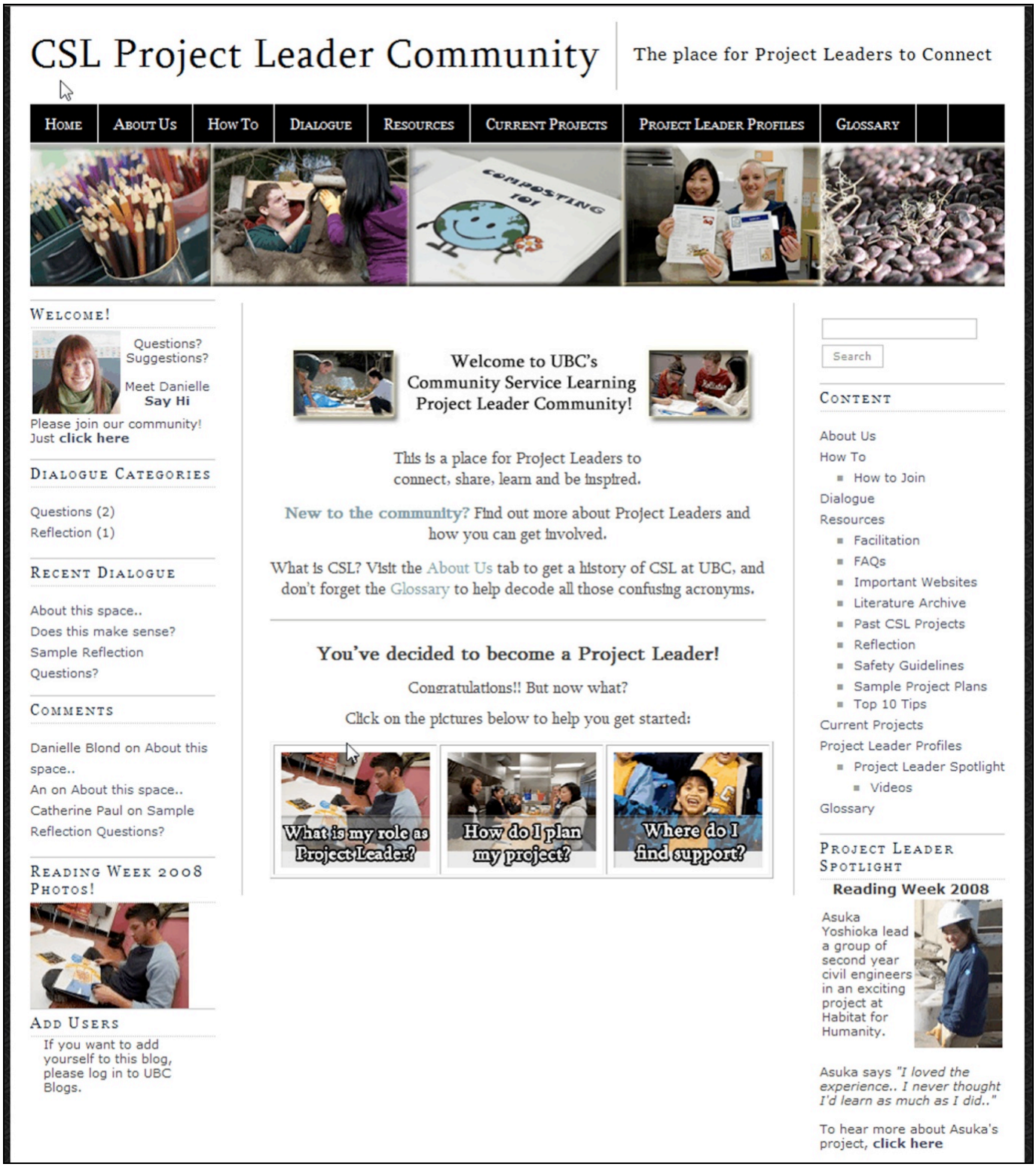


Image taken March 2009

5.4.2 Achieving the Benefits of Online Communities

Section 2.0 outlined many benefits of using online communities, specifically the benefits of creating an online Community of Practice. The section below describes how these benefits will be able to be achieved in the online space created.

1. Online communities allow for increased capability to share resources (experiences, problems, solutions, tools, methods). With this online community, sharing can occur through blogging, which will appear in the Dialogue tab. Participants can post a blog about their experiences, challenges, or successes. It was decided in the workshop process that this online space will become the "one–stop shop" for all information and resources, with the capability for participants to upload their own useful resources.
2. Online communities have a higher capacity for documentation and storing information, allowing for easy access and retrieval of current or past information. This can occur through the "search" function. Information will be organized and stored under the eight tabs. Specifically for an online community of practice, this helps to capture and store participation. As Zhang (2008) points out, "Recorded history helps members learn not only about past community practice but also about the identities of individual members because it is their participations that were recorded. This way, the recorded history becomes a great learning resource in online communities" (p. 59).
3. Online communities provide the opportunity for equal participation due to the text-based medium. This allows each participant the opportunity to post whenever and whatever he or she wants to. In contrast to face-to-face dialogue where there may be limited time for discussion, or members dominate or retreat from the conversation, this particular medium of communication allows everyone to be heard. In this way, (as a supplement to face-to-face interaction) multiple avenues are provided for various modes of communication.
4. Online communities are accessible 24 hours a day. For future Project Leaders this is very advantageous, as they will be able to check the site or post a question at their convenience. This allows for greater flexibility unlike face-to-face meetings that require people to be in the same room exchanging information at the same time.
5. Online communities create norms of reciprocity, where the whole community can see the advice given to one person. Because this online community is using blog posts as the avenue to connect with one another, if one participant blogs, the whole community can see this. When another participant reciprocates and offers a comment, the community witnesses this as well. According to the literature this helps to create the perception of a strong norm of reciprocity. Kollack (1998) says that one of the main motivators for participants to contribute to online communities is this reciprocity; a person contributes information to the community expecting that they will receive useful information in return.
6. Online communities increase network density and promote social capital. This shell was designed specifically to allow Project Leaders to connect and share knowledge. Thus creating the opportunity to increase both intra and inter networks of Project Leaders. It will allow those from within the same training group to connect and deepen their relationships (intra), as well as those from different Project Leader training programs to connect with each other (inter). Member profiles will be used to help leaders get to know each other from the different training programs. Furthermore, the member profiles will also contain "online mentors." These online mentors will be past project leaders

volunteering their time to respond to questions posted by current project leaders. As stated in the literature, social capital is formed when community members use their membership to secure benefits such as easy access to information and knowledge gathered by others in the community (Daniel, 2003). The online space will allow Project Leaders the opportunity to rely on each other as resources. Social capital has the opportunity to be built through these relationships of support and reciprocity.

7. Online communities create opportunities for social learning to occur. This online community has the potential to become a social learning tool. Instead of creating a static webpage where people only come to access resources, participants designed a space for dialogue and information exchange to occur. They deemed that this sharing of experiences with one another was an extremely important activity and that through this sharing, a collaborative learning space could occur. The online site then becomes a system that reflects the shared experiences of all its members. As previously stated, Wenger claims, "Having others who share your overall view of the domain and yet bring their individual perspectives on any given problem creates a social learning system that goes beyond the sum of its parts" (Wenger et al. 2002, cited in Sobrero, 2008 p.1). If a diverse group of Project Leaders can come together to use this space to share, learn, create knowledge, take action and reflect on experiences, then there is great potential for social learning to take place. Participants involved in the process also felt that this new online space would help to create a strong Project Leader community. One participant declared that, "I feel there WILL be [a stronger Project Leader community] when it becomes the place to go for next year's cohort" (emphasis in original).

Above I have discussed only seven potential benefits of an online community, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Hopefully these will serve as a motivation to participate in this space created.

6.0 Recommendations

This section highlights the major lessons learned throughout this project and puts forth recommendations to the UBC-CLI and to other facilitators thinking about undertaking a similar project.

Lessons learned from this project are as follows:

- It is extremely important to include participation of the eventual users in this type of process. For web designers who are normally seen as experts, collaboration with potential users of the online space is somewhat counter-cultural, however, as seen from this process it is necessary not to underestimate the ability of users to contribute effectively when given the chance. As shown in this report, both the users and OLT benefitted from this co-partnership.
- It takes dedication from the facilitators and the design team to create an environment conducive for successful collaboration to occur. This environment allows people from different backgrounds and different levels of technological know-how to effectively work together to create an online space.

6.1 Recommendations for the UBC-CLI

It is recommended that the UBC-CLI:

1. Create a strategic plan for the continuation of this collaborative engagement with the other groups of CSL actors. This plan should be used as a guide to help the facilitator design a more detailed plan for the specific group they are working with. It is recommended that this be a dynamic plan that incorporates continual feedback from those who use it. It is recommended that this plan include:
    a. **Vision:** Overall vision to continue to create online spaces with all the groups of CSL practitioners at UBC.
    b. **Principles:** Guiding principles advocating for the use of participatory methods and designers in the design of these spaces.
    c. **Targets**: Short and long-term targets for developing the other online communities.
    d. **Process Steps**: Recommended steps to include in each process. It is recommended that each subsequent process include, but is not limited to, the key participatory design steps as outlined in Section 2.0 and 4.0: Exploration, Discovery, and Prototyping. Within each of the three steps I recommend this plan highlight some important suggestions:
        i. Exploration: Take time to understand the particular group and their culture to ensure the participation options are appropriate. Draft up an initial participation plan outlining the "who, what, when, and how" of participation for this group (See Section 4.0, stage 1).
        ii. Discovery: Use participatory methods to explore what would be most beneficial to this group in terms of helping them to strengthen their networks. Outline the importance of incorporating different participation options, including the concepts of broad and deep engagement.

iii. Prototyping: Take time to discuss the feasibility of the proposed ideas with the participants. Provide participants with different options for giving feedback. Ensure enough time for continual feedback and integration.

e. **Evaluation Guidelines**: Guidelines outlining the frequency and type of evaluation (formal and informal) as well as possible evaluation methods such as participatory monitoring and evaluation.

2. Create a long-term plan for growing, nurturing and supporting the online communities that have been developed. Although this was not a specific focus of this report, it is important to look to the future and consider how to ensure the success of these communities. This plan could include:

   a. Ideas for how to encourage the growth and usage of each community, how to support members of this community

   b. Guidelines for how and who to moderate each community

   c. Guidelines for the continual evaluation of the site. Evaluation topics to consider include: does the online site meet the needs of the groups involved, does it contribute to strengthening networks and furthermore, has it led to the creation of a learning community.

3. Create a new staff position. This new staff member would help to create the above documents, continue to develop the Project Leader online community, nurture it throughout its development and help to evaluate it at the end of the academic year.

4. Continue to nurture and develop the relationship with OLT, and seek to build new partnership opportunities with web designers who are committed to learning from the users and working collaboratively.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Facilitators

From this experience, I witnessed that users and designers can work together effectively if the right environment is created. To create this type of environment, it is recommended that future facilitators:

1. Draw from and adhere to the guiding principles set out in Section 3.0 when designing and implementing the process. These principles are clear guidelines to help ensure a successful process.

2. Be clear with participants about what their participation will lead to and the decision-making power that they hold.

3. Encourage participant ownership. This requires being aware of the power dynamics at play and finding ways to help distribute this power. This could occur by:

   a. Ensuring enough time is spent focusing on achieving the 'soft' outcomes of the process. This requires a focus on relationship building, participants learning, and on exploring participants' assets.

   b. Being clear about your role as a facilitator and stepping back in the process as much as possible.

   c. Involving the participants in the creation of the workshop agendas.

    d. Involving the participants in the creation of the evaluation criteria. Deciding together the indicators of success.
    e. Including participant evaluation after every session
4. Be dedicated to the users first and the technology second. This requires focusing on the priorities of the users and using inclusive user-friendly language. Facilitating a participatory process that involves technology requires extra attention on creating an environment where participants feel safe and comfortable enough to participate. Work with your web developers to ensure this is agreed upon.
5. Be cognizant of the timing of the process. Do not rush the process but also be sensitive to participants' schedules. There should be a balance.
6. Include different participation options. Focus on offering both broad and deep levels of participation. This will allow participants to participate at the level they are most comfortable with.
7. Pay attention to small details during the process that allow participants to feel valued. This may include offering food at sessions, being organized and keeping on schedule.

7.0 Conclusions

There is great potential for this new Project Leader online community to impact the future of community service-learning at UBC. Its power is in its ability to strengthen, support and aid Project Leaders in communicating with each other. By becoming a learning community or Community of Practice, Project Leaders have the opportunity to share, learn from and reflect upon one another's knowledge and talents. This pilot project signifies a positive step in UBC-CLI's vision of strengthening actors in CSL instead of being the centralized unit or "central lynchpin" that holds everything together (Fryer, 2009 p. 12). It will be through the continual development of these learning communities that CSL will grow to become a more organic system, containing many rich networks of people working and learning together. This is just the beginning of an exciting movement in CSL at UBC, and potentially throughout Canada, as there are opportunities for other universities to draw on UBC's innovation and expertise.

For social planners, creating environments that bring people together to connect, engage in dialogue and social learning is crucial. As technology becomes more embedded in our daily lives it is essential to understand how these tools can be used to facilitate these types of interactions. The concept of social learning allows those in the community to learn from, and with each other about complex issues they are facing. It is through this dialogue that collective solutions can be found and action can be taken, and planners have the exciting opportunity to promote this type of space and facilitate these important discussions.

Personally as an aspiring social planner, this project not only presented me with the opportunity to learn about new technology and its potential to encourage networks and learning, but also allowed me to facilitate the creation of a collaboratively built website. Through this I was exposed to some of the complexities of collaborative decision-making and participatory processes, but also witnessed energy, excitement and creativity and was amazed and inspired by what a diversity of ideas and experiences could create. I saw first hand what the power of participation could achieve. This was clearly expressed by the participant who said, "It was empowering to feel like I could contribute to something like a website when I don't feel that it is an area of expertise for me." This quote clearly explains one underlying purpose of this project, to design a process in which people from any background could participate and learn. To me, this is the true value of participation.

What's Next?

The UBC-CLI will follow up with this Project Leader online community with the goal of it being further developed over the summer and put into action in the fall of 2009. Its effectiveness in strengthening networks of Project Leaders and producing a learning community will be evaluated at the end of the academic year. I am personally eager to see how this pilot project develops and the learning that will come from this. It is my desire that this project inspires all CSL practitioners to get involved and participate in creating and strengthening their own networks.

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Appendix A: Project Leader Invitation

Created by Danielle Blond, March, 2009

Appendix B: Workshop 1A Agenda

Date: March 19th, 2009

Location: WMAX Rm.150, UBC

Objectives: Participants to meet each other, reflect on past experiences, and brainstorm ideas for the online community.

Workshop Agenda

5:00-5:10 Welcome

- Introductions of Facilitators and OLT
- Background and Overview
- Housekeeping Items
- Go over Workshop Agenda

5:10-5:20 Participant Introductions

- Individual Introductions
  - What project they led?
  - What brought them to this process?
  - Express level of comfort with computers & Internet
  - What is your favorite website and why?

5:20-5:30 Mini-Brainstorm

- What do you think an online community is?
- Share examples of successful online communities.

5:30- 6:45 Activities

- Activity 1: Reflecting on past processes (20 min)
  - What are some things you wished you would have known?
  - What would have been most helpful to know?
  - What were the most helpful things to you during the process?
  - Capture ideas on post-it notes and flip chart.
  - Share with whole group.
- Activity 2: Defining themes for the online community. (20 min)
  - What do you want the online community to do?
  - What do we want to accomplish with this online interaction space?
  - Brainstorm activity: I want this online community to be a space for project leaders to _____.
  - Group comes up with top 6 ideas and writes them on post-it notes. All groups bring ideas to the centre; place the post-its on the floor. As a group, look for themes and write these on flipchart.
- Activity 3: How can we achieve each theme? (20 min)
  - Brainstorm activity: Assign themes to groups and ask them to brainstorm ways in which this theme can be achieved in the context of the online community.

- Danielle to give an example: communication
- Groups report back to the main group

6:50-6:55 Break & Closure Activity

- What is one thing that you learned today?
- What are you most looking forward to in this process?
- Any concerns?

6:55-7:00 Closing Remarks

- Discuss next session and date.
- A two page overview will be sent out.
- Remind others to give feedback over the next 2 weeks.

7:00 End of Session

Appendix C: Workshop 1B Agenda

Date: March 26th, 2009

Location: SAP Business Objects, Caspian Room - 910 Mainland, Vancouver

Objectives: Similar to workshop 1A, but include time to look at and assess different website strengths and weaknesses.

Workshop Agenda

3:00-3:15 Welcome

- Introductions of Facilitators and OLT
- Background and Overview
- Housekeeping Items
- Go over Workshop Agenda

3:15-3:25 Participant Introductions

- Individual Introductions
  - What project they led?
  - What brought them to this process?
  - Express level of comfort with computers & internet.
  - What is your favorite website and why?

3:25-3:35 Mini-Brainstorm

- What do you think an online community is?
- Share examples of successful online communities.

3:35-4:30 Activities

- Activity 1: Reflecting on past processes (15 min)
  - What are some things you wished you would have known?
  - What would have been most helpful to know?
  - What were the most helpful things to you during the process?
- Activity 2: Identify Strengths and Weaknesses of Websites. (20 min)
  - Study current Web CT CLILP and TechSoup websites. What do you value? What wouldn't you need?
  - Brainstorm: Gives examples of what works on this website and examples of what doesn't work. What was your experience with it? How did you interact with it?
  - What are the top 3 that are most important to you in a website? What are the most important things? In your small group, come up with your top 3 things that have to work for this online community (top 3 criteria).
- Activity 3: Defining ideas/themes for the online community. (20 min)
  - What do you want the online community to do?
  - What do we want to accomplish with this online interaction space?
  - Brainstorm activity: I want this online community to be a space for project leaders to _____.

- Group comes up with top 6 ideas and writes them on post-it notes. All groups bring ideas to the centre; place the post-its on the floor. As a group, look for themes and write these on flipchart.

4:30-4:45 Break & Closure Activity

- What is one thing that you learned today?
- What are you most looking forward to in this process?
- Any concerns?

4:45-5:00 Closing Remarks

- Discuss next session and date.
- A two page overview will be sent out.
- Remind others to give feedback over the next 2 weeks.

5:00 End of Session

Appendix D: Workshop 2 Agenda

Date: April 7th, 2009

Location: SAP Business Objects, 910 Mainland, Vancouver

Objectives: Talk about strengths, introduce technology, plan for Version 1.0 of the website, have participants to obtain a clearer picture of Version 1.0, and for participants to network and appreciate different perspectives.

Workshop Agenda

2:00-2:10 Welcome / How we got here

- Review of past workshops
- Housekeeping Items
- Go over Workshop Agenda
- Brief Discussion of Technology

2:10-2:25 Participant Introductions

- Individual Introductions in Groups of Three
  - What project they led?
  - What was one successful aspect of your CSL project and why??
  - What is one piece of advice you could pass on to future project leaders to ensure a similar success?

2:25-3:45 Activities

- Activity 1: Revisiting the Websites (10 min)
- Activity 2: Technology can support our ideas. (20 min)
  - OLT mini-presentation about: What are some ways that technology can support our ideas?
- Activity 3: Re-visiting Idea Clusters from previous Workshops. (50 min)
  - Participants split into 3 groups: each group take a cluster (resources, sharing ideas, informal/formal communication)
  - As a small group brainstorm what are the most important topics from this cluster to be represented on the website? And any ideas on how they can be represented on the website.
  - Group presents their ideas. Key components taken for Version 1.0. Participants vote on most important components.

3:45-3:55 Next Steps and Next Workshop

- Wrap up discussion and lessons learned.
- One thing you learned, looking forward to, etc for the next session.

3:55-4:00 Closing Remarks

- Discuss next session and date.

4:00 End of Session

Appendix E: Workshop 2 Task List Summary

Workshop 2 - Activity 3: Create and Vote on Task List for V1.0

- Goal: Participants to decide on the most important topics to have in Version 1.0
- Participants had 5 votes and voted on their "must have's" items.

	Informal Communication:	**Votes**
1	Static introduction page that links to a "blog"	**3**
2	Have links to other websites	**3**
3	RSS feed with calendar of events, new blog postings, announcements	**2**
4	Member spotlights	**2**
5	Photos: easy to upload into blog post (pictures of physical spaces of projects, approval process?)	**2**
6	Google online calendar of project dates	**1**
7	Opportunity to have space for personal blogs, or group blogs	**0**
8	Calendar of events	**0**

	Share Experiences and Ideas	**Votes**
1	Dialogue: group reflections, updating, sharing experiences/challenges, (through blog or discussion board- good searching options/tags)	**4**

	Access Resources and Tools	**Votes**
1	"2 clicks" (essentially a visual timeline with corresponding resources, important things to know etc)*	**5**
2	"What do we need to plan for?" (Example: project plans, checklists/to-do, activities, questions, example project profile- type, size, objectives)	**2**
3	Reflection (info about process, questions/activities, link to blog to submit questions?)	**2**
4	"What do we need to do?" (process/timeline, your roles)	**1**
5	FAQ/top 10 tips, glossary, Q&A (link to blog, submit questions- tag clouds)	**1**
6	"What do we need to know?" (roles and responsibilities of all players, contact information, staff info, expectations, literature archive, funding guidelines)	**0**

* Some participants voted for "2clicks" instead of other resources in this section because it could include all of the ideas in this section

Appendix F: Evaluation of Version 1.0

Survey Questions for the Evaluation of Version 1.0

Project Leader Online Community: Version 1.0

1. Project Leader Online Community V 1.0 Survey

Hi Everyone,
Please provide us with your feedback for Version 1.0: CSL Project Leader Online Community (http://blogs.ubc.ca/CSL2)
Your answers will help us to develop a better Website experience.

We estimate this survey will take 15 minutes to complete (12 questions). If possible, please fill out by Friday April 24th.

Please answer all the questions and the follow-up explanatory detail box.

Your individual responses are completely private and confidential. We will share a summary of the responses with you and the Community.

Thank you for your valuable participation and feedback!

Cheers,
Danielle

1. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall, my reaction to V1.0 is positive	○	○	○	○	○

Please Explain

2.

2. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Website V 1.0 meets my needs	○	○	○	○	○

Please Explain

3.

Page 1

Project Leader Online Community: Version 1.0

3. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Website V1.0 is easy to navigate and well structured	○	○	○	○	○

Please Explain

4.

4. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think that V1.0 has appropriate functions and capabilities	○	○	○	○	○

Please Explain

5.

5. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
From the home page, it was easy to find the appropriate link to the information I wanted	○	○	○	○	○

Please Explain

6.

6. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I found this website engaging	○	○	○	○	○

Please Explain

7.

Project Leader Online Community: Version 1.0

7. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The top TABS are appropriate for Website V1.0. (About our community, Dialogue...)	○	○	○	○	○

Which would you add or delete?

8.

8. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The CONTENT headings (on the right side bar) are appropriate for Website V1.0.	○	○	○	○	○

Would you add any headings or delete?

9.

9. Which parts of Website V1.0 are most appealing? (List Top 3)

One

Two

Three

10. Which parts of Website V1.0 require the most improvement? (List Top 3)

One

Two

Three

10.

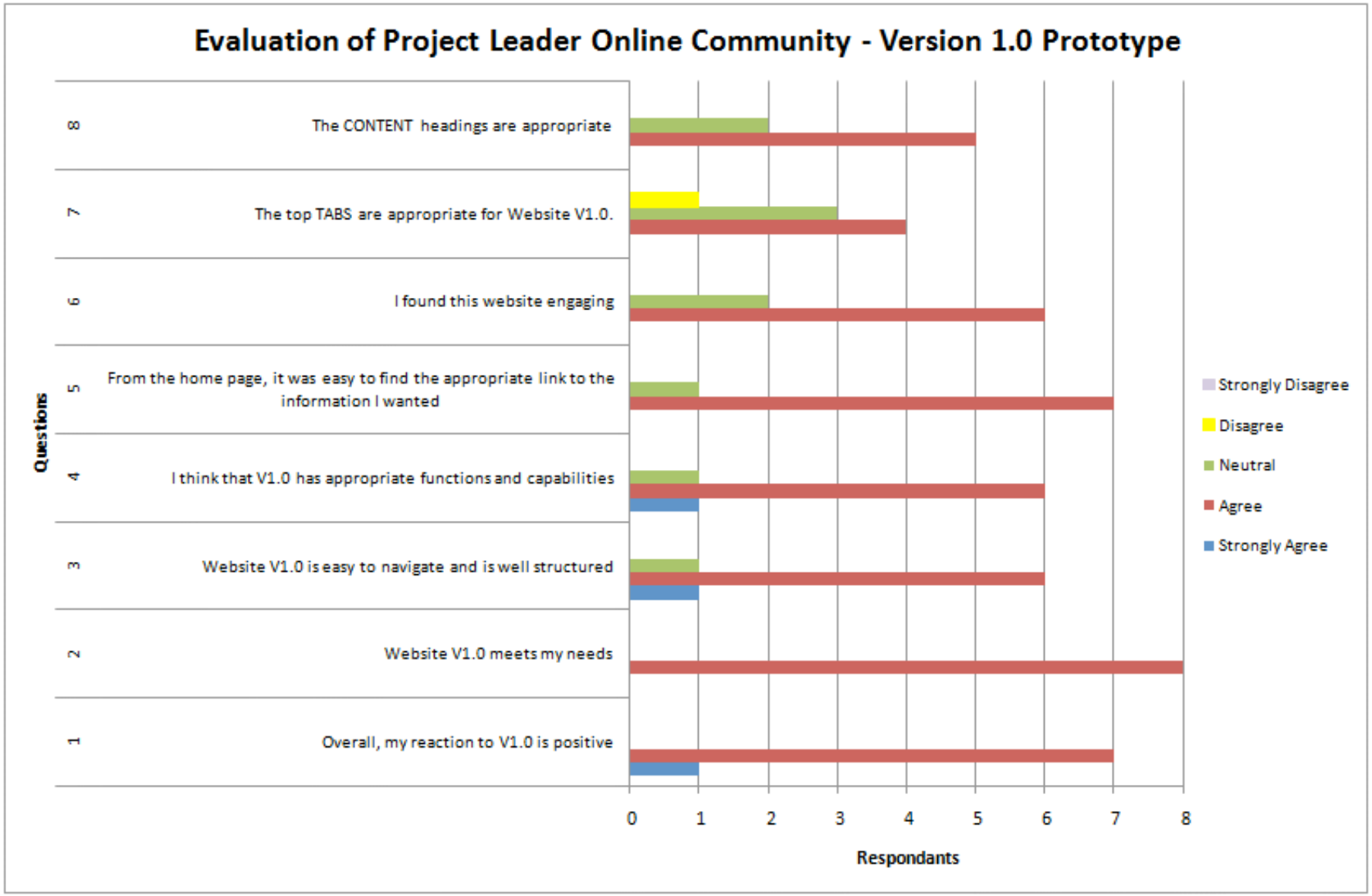
11. What would you like to see in Website V2.0?

Project Leader Online Community: Version 1.0

12. Please check all the Workshops you have attended:

- [ ] Workshop #1 March 19th - UBC
- [ ] Workshop #1 March 26th - Business Objects
- [ ] Workshop #2 April 7th - Business Objects
- [ ] I did not attend the Workshops

Survey Responses for the Evaluation of Version 1.0 – Questions 1 to 8



Survey Responses for the Evaluation of Version 1.0 – Questions 9 to 11

Question		Response
9	Which parts of Website V1.0 are most appealing?	Top 3 responses: 1. Visuals 2. Layout 3. Relevant Content (i.e. resources)
10	Which parts of Website V1.0 require the most improvement?	Top 3 Responses: 1. Home Page Messaging 2. Fonts 3. Tag Cloud
11	What would you like to see in Website V2.0?	1. Include a timeline 2. Clear roles and responsibilities 3. Put the Project Leader spotlight on the right side bar 4. Under the PL profiles, link the picture and name

Appendix G: Workshop 3 Agenda

Date: April 23rd, 2009

Location: Kits Community House, Kitsilano, Vancouver

Objectives: Have participants talk about version 1.0, brainstorm and write a purpose statement, discuss elements to include in the About tab and Homepage.

Workshop Agenda

5:30-5:35 Welcome / How we got here

- Review of past workshops
- Housekeeping Items
- Go over Workshop Agenda
- Projection of website on screen.

5:35 -6:15 Website Discussions

- Discussion Stimulators
  - What do you like about the website or are excited about?
  - What is one thing to be improved?

6:15-6:40 Activities

- Defining a Purpose Statement Large Group Brainstorm
  - What words come to mind when you think about describing this community and its purpose?
  - Focus on structuring the Purpose Statement of the website.
- Fill in as a Group, three areas on the website.
  - Ideas for the "About Us" tab
  - Ideas for the "Front Page" content
  - Complete and write a concise and clear statement of purpose.
  - Present ideas to each other

6:40-7:00 Wrap up and Next Steps

- Discuss the idea of training.
- What roles do people want to play in the website (i.e. mentors)?
- What content do they foresee the site being filled with?
- Version 2.0 will be ready for May "Unveiling"

7:00 End of session and workshop series: Goodbyes and Thank-you

Appendix H: Final Evaluation of the Engagement Process

Survey Questions for Project Leader Participants

Evaluating the PLOC Process

1. Evaluating the Project Leader online community process

Hi everyone,
Thanks for taking the time to fill out this evaluation of the process. This will be extremely helpful for future processes, and will help inform my project report.
If possible, please fill out before June 5th.

Much appreciated!
Danielle

1. Please select which workshops you attended:

- ☐ Workshop #1 March 19th @ UBC
- ☐ Workshop #1 March 26th @ Business Objects
- ☐ Workshop #2 April 7th @ Business Objects
- ☐ Workshop #3 April 23rd @ Kits House

2. Overall impression of the process

1. Please select from the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I found this process engaging:	○	○	○	○	○
I found this process fun:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments?

2. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt my opinions and thoughts were heard and valued in this process:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments?

Page 1

Evaluating the PLOC Process

3. Please select one:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall, I am happy that I participated in this process:	○	○	○	○	○

Why or why not?

4. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt that my participation made a contribution to the outcome:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments?

Evaluating the PLOC Process

5. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I thought that the participatory nature of this process (being able to participate at all stages of the website development, defining own tasks and purpose) greatly benefitted the project:	○	○	○	○	○

Why or why not?

6. Please select one:

	Yes	No
Have you participated in a similar process before?	○	○

Please explain

7. What would you say was the best aspect of this process?

8. What could be improved about this process?

3. Evaluating Learning

Evaluating the PLOC Process

1. Please choose all that apply to you:

- ☐ I learned something new about myself through this process
- ☐ I learned something new about technology
- ☐ I learned something new about processes
- ☐ I learned something new about Project Leaders
- ☐ I learned about different departments at UBC

Other (please specify)

2. What would you say was your most important learning?

4. Process Logistics

1. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt there was an adequate number of workshops to reach our goal:	○	○	○	○	○

Too many? Too few?

2. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I thought the workshops were well planned:	○	○	○	○	○

Comments?

Evaluating the PLOC Process

3. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt like all stakeholders were included in this process:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments? Who was missing?

4. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt that involving Brian Lamb and Catherine Paul from the Office of Learning Technology benefitted the process:	○	○	○	○	○

Specifically what did this add?

5. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt the activities done during the workshops were beneficial to the outcome of this process:	○	○	○	○	○

Which activity stands out for you for being most beneficial? The least beneficial?

5. Facilitation

Evaluating the PLOC Process

1. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The facilitators ensured there were positive group dynamics, and created a safe space for me to express my thoughts:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments?

2. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The facilitators valued feedback to this process and I felt I could express my feedback at any time:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments?

Evaluating the PLOC Process

3. Please select one:

	No	Sort of	Yes
If you were to envision what a facilitators role would be for this type of process, did the role the facilitators played meet your expectations?	○	○	○

Why or Why not?

6. Evaluating outcomes

1. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel the Project Leader website reflects the process:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments?

2. Please select one:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel there is a stronger Project Leader community because of this process:	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments about this?

Evaluating the PLOC Process

7. Recommendations

1. To help us improve the process, please tell us: I would have changed the process by...

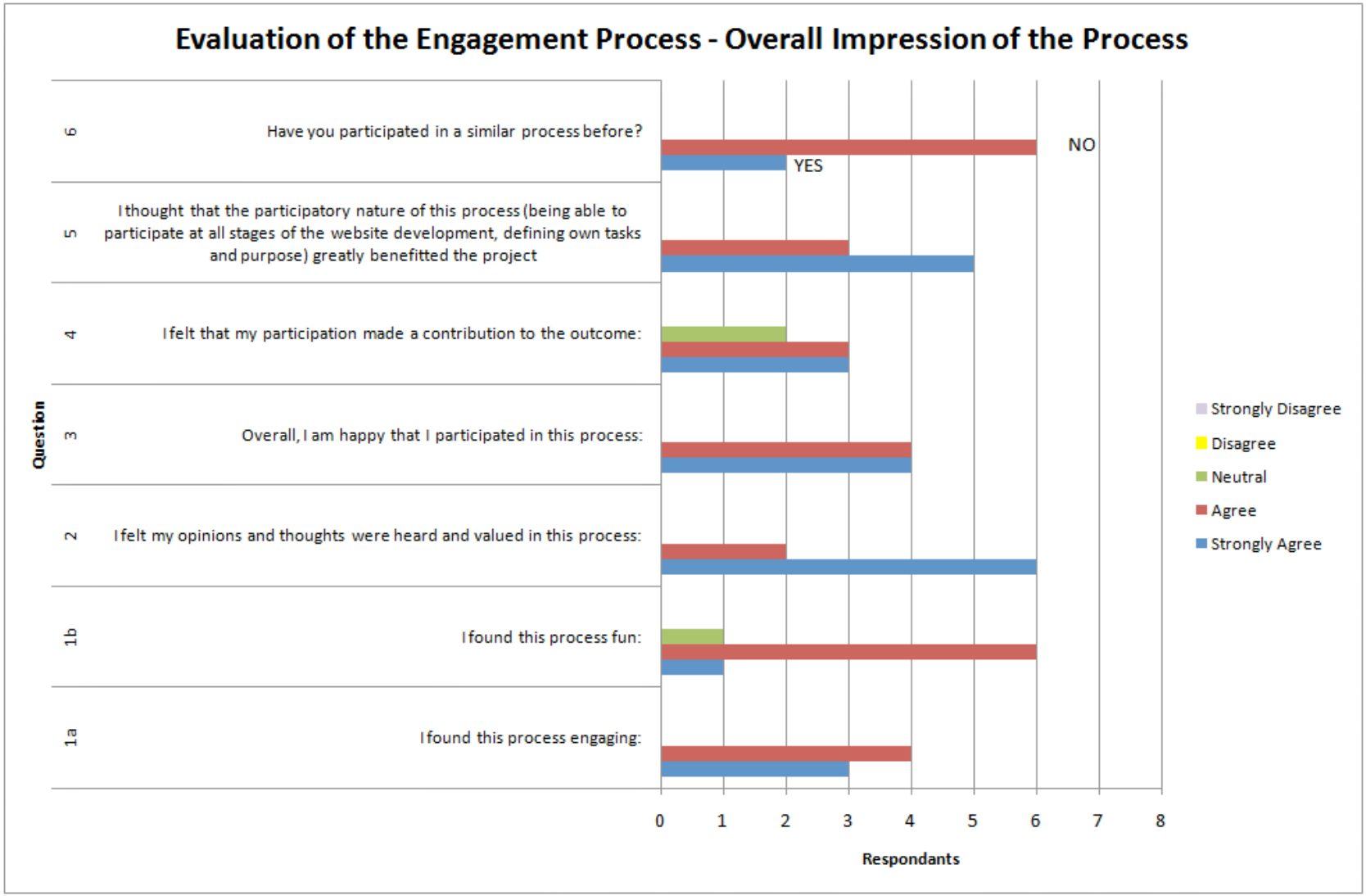
2. My recommendations for future similar processes are:

3. Please leave any other comments you have about the process:

Thank-you all for your participation in the process and for taking the time to fill out this evaluation! I will share with you an aggregate report of this survey in late June.

take care!
Danielle

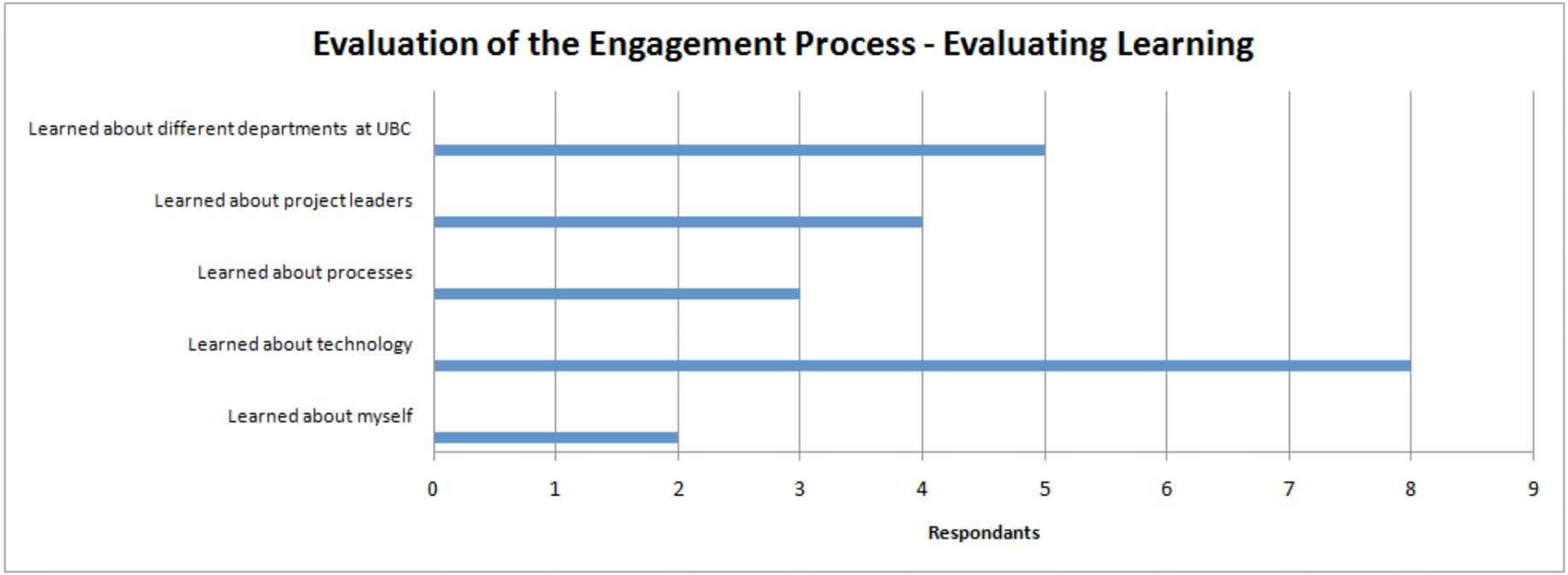
Survey Responses for Section 2: Overall Impressions of the Process - Questions 1-6



Survey Responses for Section 2: Overall Impressions of the Process - Questions 7-8

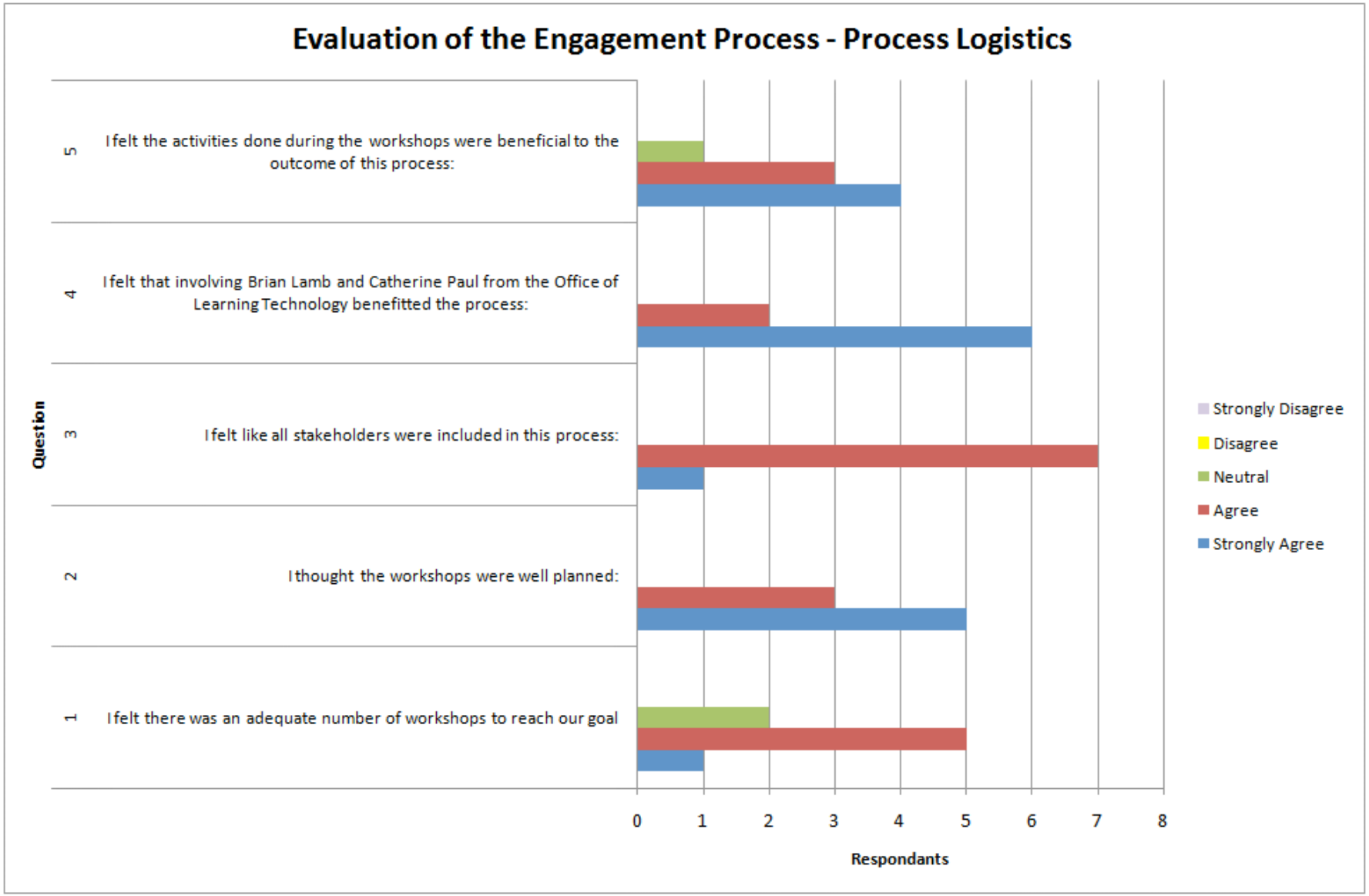
Question		Response
7	What would you say was the best aspect of this process?	1. The collaborative approach to identifying our priorities and messaging on the site. 2. Being able to see tangible results (i.e. the website) 3. Great facilitation. 4. Enjoyed having mechanism to receive and incorporate feedback. 5. Being able to converse with people with different experiences. 6. Hearing from a variety of project leaders. 7. Organization of the process
8	What could be improved about this process?	1. I felt like others were less engaged and committed to the process than I was. 2. Unfortunate timing but these things are sometimes hard to control. 3. More notice about dates/time and asking for feedback between sessions. 4. Clear timeline of workshops from beginning. 5. The meeting places were not optimal.

Survey Responses for Section 3: Evaluating Learning of the Process

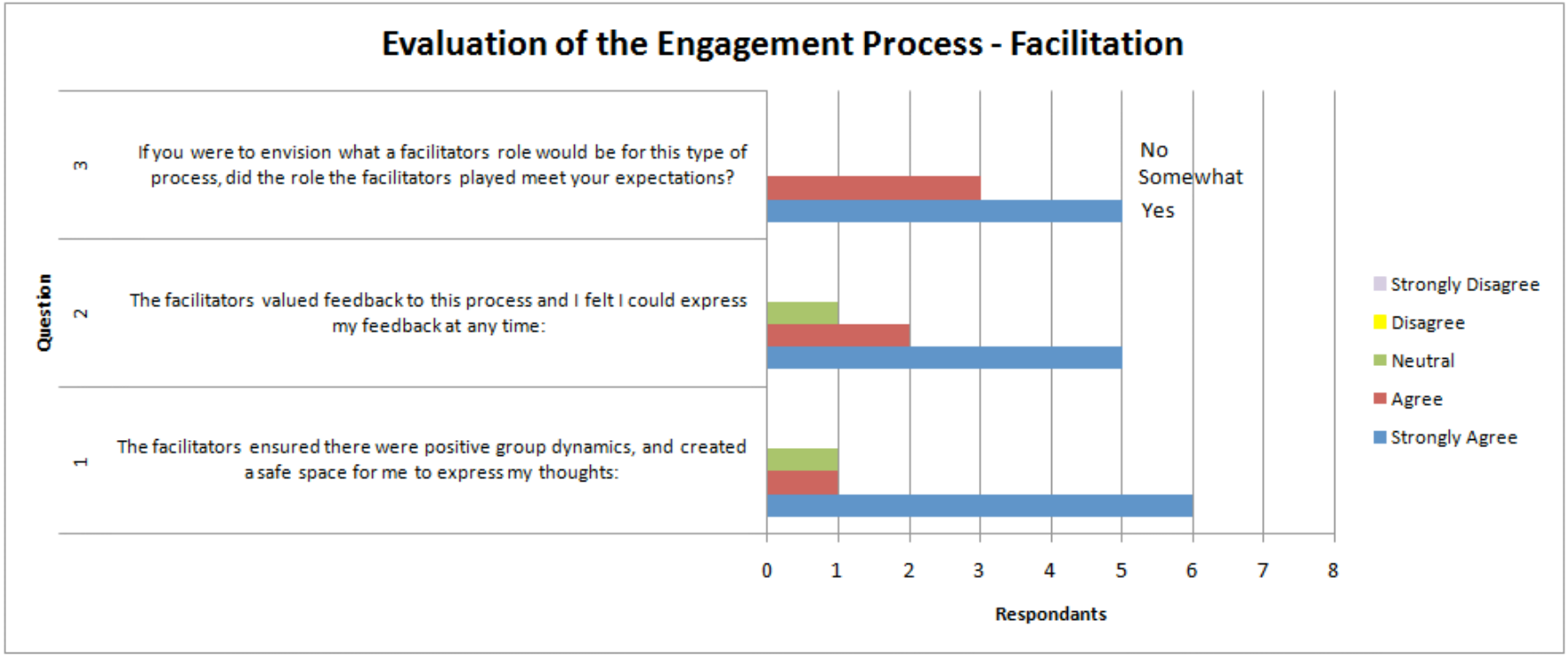


Question		Response
2	What was your most important learning?	1. I learned more about how to make an ongoing process engaging for those involved, and the importance of feeling ownership over a project. 2. I learned about the versatility of blogs...fascinating! 3. Learning about the other project leaders at UBC was very interesting to understand the other groups working in this area 4. The possibilities and limitations of internet tools 5. Being able to converse with people with different experiences.

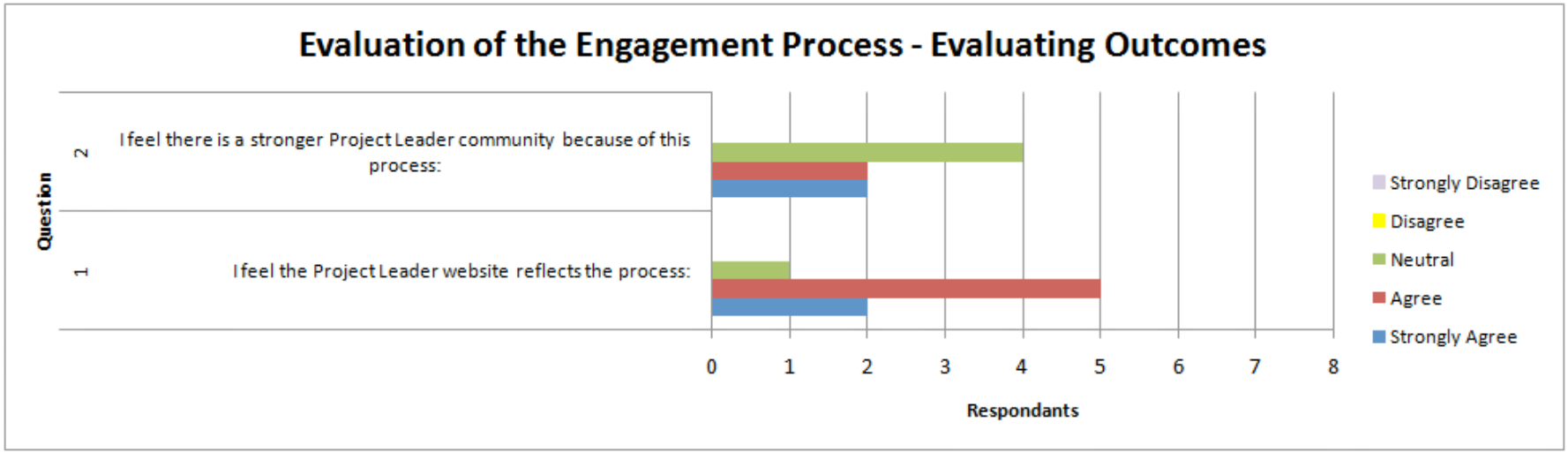
Survey Responses for Section 4: Evaluating Process Logistics



Survey Responses for Section 5: Evaluating Facilitation



Survey Responses for Section 6: Evaluating Outcomes



Survey Responses for Section 7: Recommendations

Question		Response
1	I would have changed the process by…	1. Have a more diverse group of project leaders be involved 2. Including a few more people or guarantee that the majority of people could make the workshop date
2	My recommendations for future similar processes are:	1. Try to get even more buy-in from various groups involved, ex. Business Objects continue with the process until the end. 2. Have a more centralized location for meetings. 3. Have the facilitators remain more in the background during the process.
3	Please leave any other comments you have about the process:	1. Thanks for always providing treats. 2. Great job! 3. Thanks for the great food! It made coming after work much more enjoyable.

Appendix I: OLT - Final Evaluation Questions

A. Thoughts on the process:

1. Do you think this process was effective for reaching the goal to produce a Project Leader website? If so, what about this process was most beneficial to the outcome?
2. How satisfied were you with your involvement in the process?
3. Do you think OLT benefitted from your involvement in this process? If so, in what ways?
4. For you personally, what was the best aspect of being involved in this type of process?
5. What do you think was your most important learning during this process?

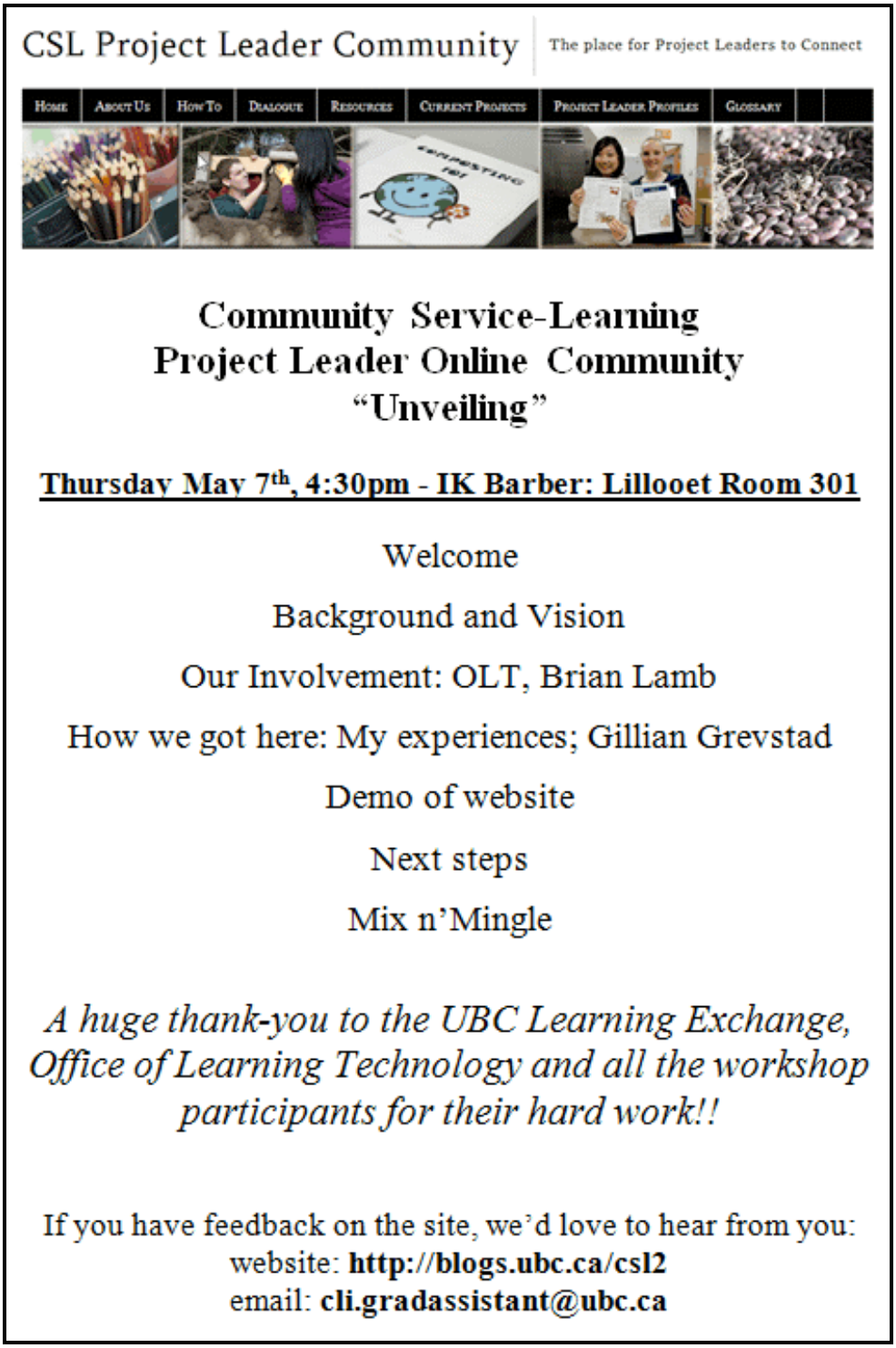
B. Thoughts on the Logistics:

1. Do you think 3 workshops was an adequate amount for this process? Too many/too few?
2. Did you think the activities done during the workshops benefitted the outcome (website)?
3. Do you think all the relevant stakeholders were included in this process?

C. Any recommendations for future processes of this type?

D. Any other comments you would like to make.

Appendix J: Agenda for the Unveiling of the Website



Community Service-Learning
Project Leader Online Community
"Unveiling"

Thursday May 7th, 4:30pm - IK Barber: Lillooet Room 301

Welcome

Background and Vision

Our Involvement: OLT, Brian Lamb

How we got here: My experiences; Gillian Grevstad

Demo of website

Next steps

Mix n'Mingle

A huge thank-you to the UBC Learning Exchange, Office of Learning Technology and all the workshop participants for their hard work!!

If you have feedback on the site, we'd love to hear from you:
website: **http://blogs.ubc.ca/csl2**
email: **cli.gradassistant@ubc.ca**