The CSCCE Community Participation Model – part two

Exploring the Champion mode

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Acknowledgements

Citing and reusing this guide

CITATION AND REUSE

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About CSCCE

The Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement (CSCCE) champions the importance of human infrastructure for effective collaboration in STEM. We provide training and support for the people who make scientific collaborations succeed at scale - and we also research the impact of these emerging roles.

We have experience both building champions programs directly and also working with clients to support programs that they are developing - in research data management, adoption of metadata

standards, community maintenance and more. Please get in touch to discuss how we might support you with your champions program.

We also host a community champions programs working group that currently meets monthly. You can find more information about the group on our website, and enquire about joining by emailing info@cscce.org.

Note from the authors

In part one of the CSCCE Community Participation Model (CPM) guidebook, we outlined our model for describing member engagement in STEM communities - the domain on which CSCCE focuses. We've been delighted to hear of the numerous places in which the model has been applied, including strategic planning processes, staff retreats, community engagement plans, grant applications, programming audits, and more. And we're likewise thrilled to hear the adoption of the CPM terminology by STEM community managers - enabling us all to meaningfully start to compare the activities across our communities by using a unifying language.

We're now releasing this companion guidebook, which focuses in more detail on the CHAMPION mode of the CPM. A third guidebook in this series will be released in the coming months, consolidating some of our thinking about the supporting activities (that we term "scaffolding") that are needed to transition between modes in the CPM.

Finally, as part of our work to support community managers who are planning or running community champions programs, we convene a champions program working group in our community of practice. In collaboration with the members of this group, we will be releasing further resources focused on each of the phases of champions programs (as outlined in this guidebook) later this year.

Thank you, as always, for reporting back on the usefulness of our materials and making suggestions for future content. Please keep emailing your feedback to info@cscce.org.

A recap of the CSCCE Community Participation Model

The CSCCE CPM describes four modes of member engagement that can occur within a community - CONVEY/CONSUME, CONTRIBUTE, COLLABORATE and CO-CREATE, and a fifth meta-mode, CHAMPION, indicated by the bi-directional gradient arrow beneath the other modes in figure 1.
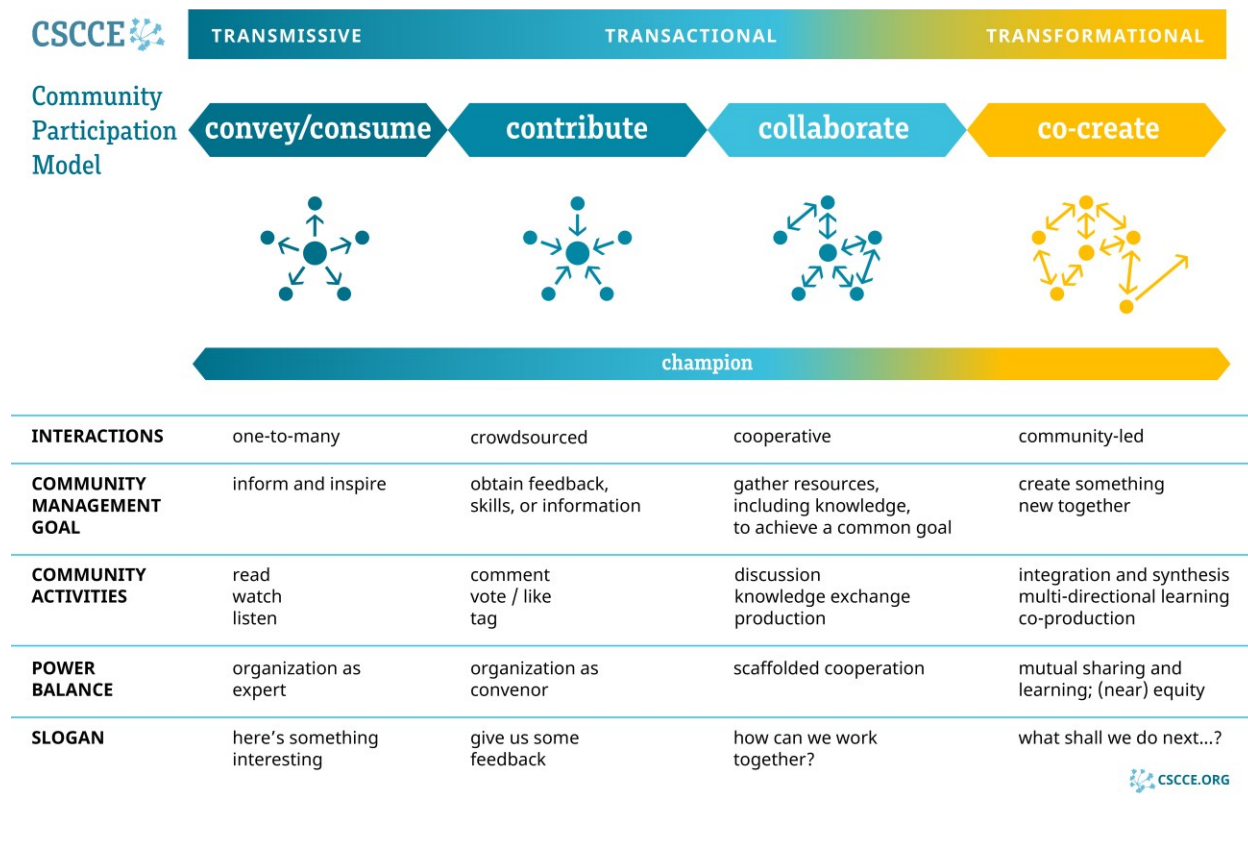

	TRANSMISSIVE	TRANSACTIONAL		TRANSFORMATIONAL
	convey/consume	contribute	collaborate	co-create
INTERACTIONS	one-to-many	crowdsourced	cooperative	community-led
COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT GOAL	inform and inspire	obtain feedback, skills, or information	gather resources, including knowledge, to achieve a common goal	create something new together
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES	read watch listen	comment vote / like tag	discussion knowledge exchange production	integration and synthesis multi-directional learning co-production
POWER BALANCE	organization as expert	organization as convenor	scaffolded cooperation	mutual sharing and learning; (near) equity
SLOGAN	here's something interesting	give us some feedback	how can we work together?	what shall we do next...?

Figure 1

The CSCCE Community Participation Model describes four modes of community member participation, CONVEY/CONSUME, CONTRIBUTE, COLLABORATE, and CO-CREATE, as well as a fifth "super user" mode, the CHAMPION mode. Member activities are generally convened or scaffolded by a community manager, who usually represents an organization or institution. Woodley and Pratt (2020) doi:10.5281/zenodo.3997802

Recapping from our first guidebook:

CHAMPION - the champion mode is when a community member is motivated to take on more responsibility for the success, sustainability, and/or running of the community. This might look like advocating for the community on social media, running a working group or local chapter, or taking the lead in creating and maintaining documentation to support the community.

This can be thought of as a meta-mode describing actions both within and outside of the community. A community CHAMPION may use any of the four core modes described in the CPM in their CHAMPIONing activities (e.g., CONVEY: they post on social media to spread the word more widely; CONTRIBUTE: they host a local event to bring others together; COLLABORATE: they host a working group call; CO-CREATE: they run trainings or other activities for others in the community). In effect,

a CHAMPION acts to supplement the work of the community manager in any or all of the four modes, and as such can be thought of as an emergent leadership role. A member acting in CHAMPION mode may or may not be part of a formal champion, ambassador, or advocacy program run by the community.

When do community champions become important in a community?

Not every community member will become a community champion, but without champions a community is unlikely to reach its full potential. When should a community manager start thinking about champions? Typically, a community will form around a perceived shared need or interest, e.g., professional development in a specific area or enthusiasm to have a place to regularly explore a topic. However, the unique value of a community only emerges once members begin to shape their activities and interactions together; simply deciding to host an annual event is usually not sufficient by itself to form a community.

Once a community's value has become apparent and resonant, champions may start to arise spontaneously as emergent leaders who are keen to support and advance the mission. This could look like members of a community of practice suggesting and volunteering to lead topical subgroups, or open science advocates wishing to provide information to enable their colleagues to adopt more open ways of working. Alternatively, champions may be intentionally recruited as a way of supporting the community - something that may require a champions program. Given the range of ways in which champions may manifest within a community, we've included a short glossary below to clarify key terms.

A short glossary of terms related to community champions

Community champion: An emergent leadership role within a community in which a community member takes on more responsibility for the success, sustainability, and/or running of the community.

Formal champions: Members of a community in champions roles that are recognized with named leadership positions. There may or may not be a champions program to support these individuals.

Examples: code of conduct committee members, working group leads

Informal champions: Members of a community without a named leadership role who nevertheless go above and beyond in their efforts to advance the mission of the community. These may also be thought of as "super-users."

Examples: advocating for the community at events and on social media

Champions program: A program, usually run by the community manager, that recruits community

members to take on tasks and activities designed to advance the mission of the community while also bringing champions together for peer support, training, and/or access to other resources.

Examples: the ASAPbio Fellows program, the Crossref Ambassadors program, the NMDC Ambassadors program

What role(s) do champions serve?

When thinking about community champions, it can be helpful to consider where there are emerging needs in the community, e.g., maintenance tasks that aren't being fulfilled, or a desire to be more responsive to changing needs in the broader ecosystem. Champions may have one or more of three broad functions: they can help to MAINTAIN, GROW, or EVOLVE the community and its activities. Depending on the age or maturity of your community, you might want to encourage specific championing activities, such as helping MAINTAIN a large community or helping GROW a new or emergent community.

CSCCE Functions of Community Champions	**maintain**	**grow**	**evolve**
DEFINITION	Champions support the day-to-day running of the community	Champions support the growth and extend the impact of the community and its outputs	Champions contribute to steering the direction of the community
EXAMPLE	welcoming new community members, serving on the code of conduct committee	referring new members, sharing resources outside the community	serving on a steering committee / task force or participating in focus groups

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Figure 2
The three broad functions of community champions.

MAINTAIN - This function involves champions supporting the day-to-day running of the community, which can provide opportunities for them to learn new skills under the supervision of the community manager, make deeper connections with other members of the community, and express normative commitment to the community (a desire to "give back" to a cause they value). Examples of maintaining activities can include creating supporting documentation, serving on a welcome team to mentor new members of the community as they get started, and serving on the code of conduct committee to give advice about addressing code of conduct violations.

GROW - Champions are also an amazing asset if you are hoping to grow your community. They might

do this by sharing your communications and resources with their own social and professional networks, acknowledging or mentioning your community at conferences and events, or encouraging their colleagues and friends to join the community. They might also offer insight on how to frame your communications, or identify effective communications channels, so that you can recruit new members. Such champions benefit from enhanced and expanded connections and increased social capital within the community, and the community in turn receives external validation along with increased membership. It's important as a community manager to support these (often informal) champions by offering support with how to talk about the community, ensuring easy access to assets such as logos, slide templates and stock photos, as well as regularly expressing gratitude for the work they do.

EVOLVE - As communities grow, their goals or outputs might shift in response to emerging needs of members and/or changes in the broader ecosystem to which the community belongs. Community champions are often critical in navigating this process by serving on steering committees, advisory boards, or working groups to ensure that members' perspectives are represented. Champions may also be the ones who take on leadership roles in spin-off communities or work with existing leadership to explore new opportunities (e.g., funding, launching new initiatives, entering new domains).

What are the impacts of community champions?

In supporting the maintenance, growth and evolution of their community, champions have the unique ability to impact the CAPACITY, LEGITIMACY, and REACH of the community. These three broad types of impact are not mutually exclusive, and in fact may often be mutually reinforcing. For example, a champion who is well respected in an adjacent community (LEGITIMACY) can both GROW the community in terms of increasing membership while also EVOLVING the community by opening the door to applying the community's materials in a new domain (REACH).

CAPACITY - Champions can help to increase the CAPACITY of a community by either taking on leadership roles themselves or engaging others to coordinate programming in a way that community staff alone could not support. In the example of a community of practice, once the community starts to thrive, the community manager can quickly become immersed in the day-to-day community-wide activities that support all members across the community (e.g., onboarding new members, synthesizing content for newsletters, hosting core programming such as community calls, and managing the overall administrative activities of the community such as keeping the website up to date). A community manager is unlikely to be able to satisfy emerging needs such as supporting programming in multiple topical subgroups, especially if they are also expected to continue the community-wide programming. Formal champions can help by leading the subgroups, guest editing newsletters, or serving on a welcome committee. Informal champions can help by assisting with moderation or welcoming new members on intro threads.

LEGITIMACY - Champions may bring LEGITIMACY to the activities and outputs of the community in the specific contexts in which they work. This can be important for advancing the community or

organization's mission or a subset of activities that relate to its mission. For example, an organization that exists to promote preprints might work with champions to run workshops at their universities to gauge attitudes and discuss barriers to preprint adoption. A workshop hosted by a local representative might enable researchers to have more frank, context-specific conversations than if a member of staff representing the community organization were to host the workshop. Similarly, an informal champion who shares the value of the community at a conference may bring more legitimacy than a member of staff giving a promotional lightning talk about the benefits of the community.

REACH - Champions can also extend the REACH of a community by providing insights into local level contexts and needs that help to evolve the direction of the community, including reaching into domains or locations that the community team alone could not serve. This might look like translating community materials into different languages, applying core frameworks to new fields, or gathering feedback from populations that the community does not currently work with. Importantly, reach is a direct function of the diversity of your community's champions. Without diverse voices sharing their perspectives and expertise, your ability to reach beyond an initial group and continue to adapt to your members' evolving needs will be impaired.

How do you support champions?

There are a variety of ways to support community champions - ranging from providing scaffolding for volunteer roles such as templates and how-to guides, to creating custom, time-limited programming in a champions program. The goals of the community-convening organization will influence whether to support champions in the first place, with the size, age, resources and needs of the community all influencing what types of support are most appropriate.

Do note that while champions may increase the range of possible activities in a community, supporting them does take a significant time commitment, even if they are in informal roles. We consider the work of supporting all of the members in the community as just one key community management role - which might involve coordinating core programming, newsletters, and other regular communications. It can be envisaged as a role that spans the whole community, ensuring cohesion around the community's mission. By contrast, supporting champions is a distinct role in which emergent leaders are empowered, via scaffolding coordinated by the community manager, to step up into leadership positions. Supporting champions ultimately advances the community's mission in a positive feedback loop, enhancing its capacity, legitimacy, and/or reach. It may not be realistic for a single community manager to both effectively manage the entire community *and* provide specialized coordination for champions, especially if the community is large or the formal champions program is time-consuming.

Informal champions

Informal champions (see glossary above) may have taken on their roles in an ad hoc way, and only engage in certain types of activities such as greeting new members in a welcome channel on Slack.

In this instance, much of the support you offer as a community manager may be quite reactive as their needs emerge. However, there are a few key pieces of scaffolding that you can preemptively make available and accessible so that any member of the community can be an informal champion:

- **An easy to find (and navigate) resource collection** on your website or community platform. This might include clear and concise information about the community such as a one-page flyer, poster and presentation templates, and FAQs about the community should champions wish to tell others about the community.
- **A directory of leadership and/or membership**, so that champions can easily identify who to contact if they have questions.
- **Clear calls to action for ways to be an informal champion**. For example, how to moderate content, welcome new members, or contribute to the creation or updating of resources.

Formal champions

Formal champions, those members of the community who are serving on steering committees, code of conduct committees, or other defined leadership roles, are more likely to require specific scaffolding to help them perform their role efficiently and effectively. You can prepare much of this material in advance of creating the roles, iterating over time as you learn more about member needs:

- **Clear documentation of expectations and time commitment**, including, for example, a meeting/events calendar. If champions are being compensated for their time, clear communication of how stipends will be administered or travel expenses reimbursed.
- **Resources to remove administrative burden**, such as agenda templates or access to shared documents/drives.

Champions programs

Formal champions programs are the most involved way of supporting emergent leaders in your community. Such programs are intentional, and usually have a stated goal, a recruitment period to engage participants, and a defined set of actions or trainings in which champions will take part. Champions programs also generally engage members for a specific length of time, and so it's important to consider the end as well as the beginning.

Formal champions programs have nine stages that a community manager should consider when developing the program (outlined in figure 3). Not every step may be equally relevant for every program, but this framework can help set expectations about the amount of work and resources that are needed to run a champions program, as well as optimizing the champions' individual experiences. Working through these steps will also enhance the overall impact of the program by highlighting potential roadblocks or areas of uncertainty.

CSCCE
Creating a Community Champions Program

1. Making a case
2. Inclusive recruitment
3. Participation requirements
4. Onboarding
5. Rewards & incentives
6. Training & other support
7. Increasing engagement
8. Offboarding
9. Evaluation

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Figure 3
The nine stages of community champions program development.

1. **Making a case** - When making a case for the resources to run a champions program, you'll need to carry out member research to determine what's needed, create a budget, come up with a name (or a list of potential names) for your program, and an outline of the goals and programming. This will help you convince leadership that your idea is worth funding as well as set expectations about its potential value.

2. **Inclusive recruitment** - While you may have a target demographic in mind for your program, casting your net wide is crucial both for the success of your program and the health of your community culture. In this phase, you will consider the recruitment process, how to reach beyond your immediate circle, and how you can ensure your program is accessible.

3. **Participation requirements** - Who is eligible to be a champion in your community? Is there a selection process or can anyone sign up? Make sure you communicate the selection process and/or participation requirements clearly, and have a process in place for how you (or a selection committee) will decide who is welcomed into the program.

4. **Onboarding** - Once you have recruited your champions, you'll need to make sure they feel welcomed and know what is expected of them for the duration of the program. In this phase, you'll share supporting documentation such as a playbook, and outline the schedule of events (e.g., if you are running an in-person workshop or weekly virtual check-ins). This is also a great time to consider how you can use the program to build community among the champions themselves (e.g., via champions-specific channels and events) and nurture a sense of trust so that champions feel able to share their perspectives.

5. **Rewards and incentives** - Not all champions programs offer incentives, but if you are asking for a significant time commitment you might consider offering a stipend or other reward, such as travel support to attend a conference. Other options for recognition include highlighting champions on your website or community platforms, offering badges they can add to their personal websites, physical goodies such as hats, pins, or stickers, and ensuring that their accomplishments and activities are worthy of highlighting on their CV or resumé. And if budget is a sticking point for you, never underestimate the value of saying thank you, early and often!

6. **Training and other support** - While your champions are taking part in your program, what support will you offer them? Depending on your goals and activities, this might look like professional development training, a peer-support network in Slack, code of conduct enforcement training, or regular office hours.

7. **Increasing engagement** - Community management is typically an iterative and adaptive process based on regular reflection. If your champions program is already running but your champions are less engaged than you'd hoped, it's a good idea to pause and take stock of how you can increase engagement. This might look like adjusting your programming or consulting with your champions to find out what they need.

8. **Offboarding** - Most champions will serve for a specific time frame and it's important to build in an offboarding process to recognize everyone's contributions, offer emotional closure, and facilitate the curation of materials and knowledge gained during the program so that this is not lost. You might also consider here whether there is a "next step" for participants in your program, or positions within the community that they are now trained to take on such as mentoring future champions. Practically, you will also need to ensure that you are prepared to take back ownership of shared documents, update materials based on new knowledge, and transition ongoing projects to new champions.

9. **Evaluation** - Before you say goodbye to your champions, make sure to ask them how things went, either in a one-on-one interview or via a distributed survey. Depending on your budget, you might also consider engaging an outside evaluator to assess your program and advise on future offerings.

We will be releasing a series of tip sheets to explore each of the nine steps described above in more detail. These tip sheets will be co-authored with members of our champions program working group, which is made up of 25 members of our community of practice for community managers in STEM. The tip sheets will synthesize learnings from our monthly working group meetings, as well as build on best practices that are already part of CSCCE's consultancy program. If you are interested in finding out more about the ways that we can support you as you build out a champions program, or how to join our community of practice, please contact info@cscce.org.

Additional considerations

The landscape of community champions programs in STEM continues to evolve. Originally, many of these programs were about advocacy for a community or organization's activities (e.g., growing an organization's presence in the champions' local areas) and have since evolved to become professional development opportunities or more custom programs to support the running of a large community. Some ongoing conversations in this space include:

Rewards - financial or not?

It's an ongoing topic of discussion in the STEM community ecosystem about how to reward champions, and there is a clear tension between unfairly relying on volunteer labor and the tight budgets of many community-oriented organizations. Sometimes, the opportunity to learn and connect with others is sufficient reward for champions. This might look like ongoing relationships with like-minded community members and/or professional development training that can be added to a champion's CV or resumé. For significant activities intended to maintain the community, stipends are sometimes offered - but these can be challenging to administer in a global community and where

champions cannot be treated as staff members for legal reasons. In other champions programs, the time commitment and expected contributions are more flexible and rewards may include community swag, access to private channels, and/or mentions on the community website.

Equitable access

When designing champions programs, community managers should consider whether they can support offering champions multiple ways to participate. Often, these programs rely on participating in events, and champions may have family commitments or other reasons that prevent them from being able to attend outside of core work hours. As always, in program design it is important to consider accessibility, time zones, and synchronous vs. asynchronous modes of participation. If program activities take place during work hours, the community manager may build in a requirement for letters of support from supervisors consenting to the champion's participation such that their participation is protected. As always, community managers should be mindful and responsive to the needs of their members to ensure that potential champions are not unfairly excluded.

Protecting champions

Finally, there are ongoing discussions about how to balance working with volunteers while also protecting them from legal risk, such as retaliation for code of conduct decisions they may have been involved with if serving on a code of conduct committee. As always, when creating a new program or changing an existing one, taking legal advice to protect everyone involved can be a good idea.

Resources

- Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement. (2020) The CSCCE Community Participation Model – A framework for member engagement and information flow in STEM communities. Woodley and Pratt doi:10.5281/zenodo.3997802.

  This guidebook describes the CSCCE Community Participation Model in detail, answering a series of FAQs to help STEM community managers implement strategic member engagement programming. This was the first CSCCE resource to highlight the importance of community champions in building and maintaining successful communities.

- Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement. (2020) Ambassadors, Champions, Fellows, and More: What defines success in scientific community Advocacy Programs? Aicher, Binder, Laješić, O'Donnell, Pope, Rabinowitz, Volchok, and Woodley doi: 10.5281/zenodo.4012370.

  This report presents data on the scope and characteristics of existing champion programs in STEM and their possible effects on their various communities, which was collected and analyzed by the Advocacy Program Project Team of CSCCE's 2017 Community Engagement Fellowship Program (CEFP).

- CSCCE Community Call: The Advocacy Ninjas (video)

  Rosanna Volchok and Allen Pope review the Advocacy Ninjas' work in this recording of a CSCCE community call. This call took place in March of 2020, shortly before the release of the guidebook referenced above.

- CSCCE Community Call: The Busy Bees (video)

  The Busy Bees project team of the 2019 CEFP cohort (Toby Hodges, Naomi Penfold and Kathryne Woodle with support from Lou Woodley) created a survey to better understand what motivates members to act as community champions. You can learn more about the project from this presentation during our March 2020 community call.

- Future CSCCE-produced resources (e.g., the planned tip sheets mentioned) related to community champions and creating champions programs will be added to our resource page.