Small Business Friendly Program
Community of Practice framework

A component of the Small Business Friendly Program

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Small Business Friendly Program Communities of Practice Framework

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Background

The Queensland Small Business Commissioner's (QSBC) Small Business Friendly (SBF) Program is a commitment made by member organisations to work collaboratively with small businesses, stakeholders, and other organisations to enhance the operating environment for small businesses across Queensland.

The SBF Program Communities of Practice (CoP) are an element of the SBF Program. They:

- Provide a platform for creative problem-solving and innovation across member teams and organisations
- Promote the spread of best practices to improve interactions with, support, and opportunities for small business in local communities.

Practice pillars

The 3 key pillars of a CoP are:

- **Purpose:** members have shared strategic interests and goals and similar work activities

- **People:** members share knowledge, resources, learn together, and develop professionally

- **Practice:** members innovate and work through challenges together.

This collaborative learning process is a key element of all CoPs, as members work together on common challenges and opportunities to achieve their SBF priorities and strategic goals.

Communities of Practice

Within the SBF Program, there are currently four CoP domains:

Insights
Enabling innovation and more informed decisions.

Placemaking
Helping small businesses thrive.

Productivity
Growing and sustaining small business economies.

Streamlining
Reducing time and cost to interact with government.

Each of these CoPs provides an opportunity for member organisations to:

- Increase collaboration
- Grow networks and relationships
- Access subject matter experts and valuable information
- Address challenges using fewer resources
- Enhance professional development
- Create new knowledge.

About the framework

The framework provides a 3-step approach to design, manage, and review the CoPs.

Step 1: Design

Each CoP will be driven by member interests and needs and will be self-managed.

The CoP domains are designed around common SBF practice areas. More domains may be added as needed.

Each CoP will be encouraged and supported to adopt the Queensland Government human-centred design approach to address challenges, as this emphasises both the perspective and participation of the people who members are working to serve.

CoP domains

Insights

The practice of creating new value using data to provide insights about challenges, explore solutions, and better inform decisions and activities.

Placemaking

The practice of shaping and managing public spaces to attract small business investment and support vibrant, healthy, and thriving local economies and communities.

Productivity

The practice of understanding, growing and sustaining local business economies and supporting sustainable productivity and growth.

Streamlining

The practice of simplifying regulatory and administrative policies and processes to make it easier for small businesses to interact and transact with government.

Terms of reference

Each CoP is supported by a Terms of Reference (ToR) that describes the purpose, scope, and objectives of the CoP, noting objectives will vary over time.

Membership and structure

The CoPs will meet three times in a financial year. Members are required to actively participate in at least two CoP meetings in a financial year with participation open to all members' staff.

Each CoP will meet online via Teams. A CoP workshop will be hosted at the annual SBF conference, which may be attended in-person or online.

Each CoP will be led by a volunteer from within a member organisation, and they will be known as the CoP Chair.

The QSBC will support CoP Chairs by:
- Hosting the online CoP meetings
- Providing secretariat services for the meetings
- Circulating an agenda in the week prior to each meeting
- Providing a high-level summary of each meeting to members in the week following each meeting
- Coordinating the annual CoP workshop.

Roles

CoP Chair

The CoP Chair will encourage and support members to actively engage with fellow members, and contribute to CoP activities. The Chair is responsible for developing the CoP objectives, activities, and plans with fellow members.

CoP Deputy Chair

The CoP Deputy Chair will support the CoP Chair, and contribute to CoP activities. If the Chair is unavailable, the Deputy will assume their duties.

Member

A member is a person with experience and/or responsibilities relevant to the domain who has volunteered to take part in the CoP.

Step 2: Manage

The QSBC will invite members' staff to express interest in the CoP(s) they would like to participate in and:

- Volunteer as CoP Chair, CoP Deputy Chair or member
- Provide background and experience in the domain
- Outline what they are seeking to achieve/contribute.

QSBC will provide a digital platform and instructions for members' staff to register their details when the platform is open.

QSBC will appoint the CoP Chair, CoP Deputy Chair, confirm members of each CoP by email, and arrange a short introductory meeting for each CoP. Onboarding support will be provided, in collaboration with CoP Chairs, to help welcome members.

Activities

The CoP Chair will guide discussion, activities, and collaboration for the CoP each financial year. This will include:

- Setting objectives
- Identifying and consolidating member interest
- Coordinating discussions and activities for members
- Disseminating information to members
- Using insights and learning to inform future activities.

CoP members are encouraged to raise topics for discussion with the CoP Chair before each meeting and share information and resources that will be useful to other members.

Unless otherwise agreed with QSBC, costs associated with participation in the CoPs and at the annual CoP workshop will be met by the staff member's organisation.

Decision-making

Any decisions of the CoP must be made by majority consensus of its members (e.g., deciding to make a submission or recommendation about a matter).

Where consensus cannot be reached, the CoP Chair may request the QSBC to assist the CoP to reach an agreed position.

Working groups

A CoP Chair may decide to establish working groups (sub-groups) for help with specific activities arising from the CoP. Working groups report to the CoP Chair.

Information and learnings

The QSBC will capture and retain information and learnings relevant to each CoP to be used as a shared resource on the digital platform. This may include documents, webinars, educational tools and more.

The QSBC may provide information and advice to its stakeholders and the public about small business matters arising from CoP activities to:

- Promote the efforts of SBF members
- Enhance the operating environment for small business.

Members are encouraged to showcase SBF successes as they arise by making a showcase submission to the QSBC and by including these in their SBF Annual Report. New initiatives and success stories may be showcased to the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development, on digital platforms such as websites and media channels, and at SBF roundtables and other events.

Reporting

The QSBC will provide regular updates on CoP activities to SBF Program members at scheduled SBF roundtables.

QSBC will also provide an annual summary of SBF Program and CoP activities by 30 September each year (for the previous financial year).

Step 3: Review

The CoP Chair will undertake periodic review of CoP activities and provide a summary of CoP progress by 30 September each year for the previous financial year. The summary report will outline:

- Achievement of CoP objectives and activities
- New initiatives developed and successes achieved by member organisations as a result of CoP participation.

\<Domain/Organisation\> Community of Practice Terms of Reference

The Small Business Friendly (SBF) ‹domain/organisation› Community of Practice (CoP) provides an informal setting and structure for SBF program members to communicate, collaborate, promote best practice, and enhance member capability within the domain.

Objectives

The objectives of the CoP will vary over time but will:

- Identify and consolidate member interests
- Coordinate activities that address member needs
- Share best practices and resources for member use
- Record, review, and report on CoP learning and associated member successes.

Membership

Membership is open to SBF Program officers from across multiple departments and teams who are involved in SBF activities.

Term

- No fixed term for members
- A fixed term for CoP Chair and CoP Deputy Chair is up to 24 months by agreement, aligned to the financial year.

Meetings

- Members will meet online periodically three times a year via Microsoft Teams according to an agreed schedule. Meetings will run between 1-2 hours
- Meetings will consist of a combination of presentations from subject matter experts and stakeholders, discussions, networking opportunities, and other activities members deem useful
- Additional out-of-session meetings may be scheduled by agreement with members
- An annual CoP workshop will be coordinated by the QSBC in conjunction with the SBF conference held in May.

Roles and responsibilities

- The CoP Chair may establish a working group to assist the CoP; facilitate the meetings, and provide a report to QSBC on CoP progress by 30 September each year for the previous financial year
- If established, working groups will provide help on specific initiatives
- CoP members will raise topics for discussion with the CoP Chair before each meeting and share information and resources that will be useful to other members
- Members are required to actively participate in at least two CoP meetings each financial year and attend the annual CoP workshop in-person or online
- The QSBC will provide secretariat and administrative support to the CoP meetings, in collaboration with the CoP Chair, and coordinate the annual workshop.

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