

## 8 Toolkit: Telling stories about the value of communities and networks

This toolkit offers two templates for telling stories about the value of participating in a community or network. These templates were originally designed for teachers in a learning network, but they can be used as templates for any profession belonging to a community or a network.

### I. Overall value of participation

The first template is meant to capture your overall experience of participation in a community or network and what you gained from it.

### II. Specific instances of value creation

The second template is meant to capture very specific instances in which something that happened in your community or network helped you in some way. The idea is to provide concrete anecdotes of what you mentioned in the first template. You can use this template as many times as you want if you have more than one story to share.

For each template, this toolkit includes:

- A set of instructions
- A filled-out example for a teacher
- An empty template you can use yourself to tell your value creation story

## 8.1 The overall value narrative

Use this template first for describing your overall experience of participation. You might feel that you are connected to more than one particular community or network. Please feel free to use a different template for each particular network and give them a name.

The template is in the form of a table that shows the various ways in which you can talk about the value of your community or network:

### Columns: aspects of your professional life

The columns refer to areas of your professional life where a community/network is useful

1. The first column is about you personally. How does the community/network affect your experience as a professional, your skills, your feelings, your inspiration, and your professional identity?
2. The second column is about your relationship with your colleagues. Did your general level of interaction change? Have you made new friends/colleagues? Do you have a better sense of who knows what and who could help you with what? Do you think that the level of trust and mutual commitment has changed?
3. The third column is about your professional practice. Do you do things differently in your work? Do you deal with your clients/students/colleagues differently?
4. The fourth column is about your relationship with your organization or profession more generally. Have you gained a new voice? Do you feel that you can influence what happens in your field in a new way? Again if you were not expecting this or if it did not happen just skip this column.

**Note:** This is merely a guide for telling your story. You do not have to fill every cell, only the ones where you have something to say. For instance, if you did not have any expectation that your community/network would change your relationship with your colleagues, just skip cell two of row one.

### Rows: how your story unfolded

The rows describe the stages of your experience of participation:

1. The first row is about your reasons for participating. Why did you decide to participate? What were you hoping to achieve? What were your motivations and expectations?
2. The second row is about what happened in the community/network. What were significant events, moments of participation, and experiences?
3. The third row is about what you gained from participating. How did this make a difference to you? How did it affect your context?

**Personal value narrative: filled-out example for a teacher**

<b>Name:</b> <b>Network of music teachers</b>	How participation is changing <b>me as a teacher</b> (e.g., skills, attitude, identity, self-confidence, feelings, etc.)	How participation is affecting <b>my social connections</b> (e.g., number, quality, frequency, emotions, etc.)	How participation is helping <b>my teaching practice</b> (e.g., ideas, insights, lesson material, procedures, etc.)	How participation is changing <b>my ability to influence</b> my world as a teacher (voice, contribution, status, recognition, etc.)
<b>Reasons for participation</b> (e.g., challenges, aspirations, professional development goals, meeting people, etc.) <b>+/-</b>	My reason for participating in this network is to be inspired by other teachers. This helps me a lot. Talking with each other about how to experiment with new things in your class is a real eye-opener. I have learned more about teaching music, we shared know how, which is useful for me.	This network helps me meeting new people interested in music education. I feel less lonely when it comes to talking about music education. In my school there is only a little group of colleagues interested in this.	I have gained some new insights and ideas. Also we have been developing some lesson plans together.	Together we have some influence on how we would like to teach music education in our schools. I have a very positive conversation with our head master about our network the other day.
<b>Activities, outputs, events, networking</b> (e.g., lesson material, discussion, visits, etc.) <b>+/-</b>	Participation is fun and I feel more involved when it comes to music education. In the beginning I felt insecure and a little dumb, but now I feel I can say and share what I like, which is important to me.	I know whom to turn to for help and information when I have a question. There is a lot of trust in our network, they feel like friends to me.	Some outputs are the production of new lesson materials and fun music activities I can do with the pupils in my class.	Talking about our shared experience when we have tried new musical approaches in our own classrooms. Presenting new ideas to my colleagues.
<b>Value to me</b> (e.g., being a better teacher, handling difficult students, improving my students learning, Improving school performance, etc.) <b>+/-</b>	Direct value for me is to be better prepared, because I have talked about it in our network. I worry less and have less headaches when it comes to experimentation with music education.	It feels good to know what others are doing and how they feel about this. This helps me to reflect in my own work.	I feel that the pupils in my class are more engaged.	Seeing ideas come to life. Receiving recognition from my colleagues in the school about innovative ideas around music education.

**Note:** +/- Indicates that you can provide positive / negative experiences

**Personal value narrative: empty template (for any professional)**

<b>Name:</b> How participation is changing <b>me as a professional</b> (e.g., skills, attitude, identity, self-confidence, feelings, etc.)	How participation is affecting <b>my social connections</b> (e.g., number, quality, frequency, emotions, etc.)	How participation is helping <b>my professional practice</b> (e.g., ideas, insights, material, procedures, etc.)	How participation is changing <b>my ability to influence</b> my world as a professional (voice, contribution, status, recognition, etc.)
<b>Reasons for participation</b> (e.g., challenges, aspirations, professional development goals, meeting people, etc.) <b>+/-</b>			
<b>Activities, outputs, events, networking</b> (e.g., lesson material, discussion, visits, etc.) <b>+/-</b>			
<b>Value to me</b> (e.g., being a better professional, handling difficult situations, improving organizational performance, etc.) <b>+/-</b>			

**Note:** +/- Indicates that you can provide positive / negative experiences

## 8.2 Specific value-creation stories

Use this template for telling specific examples of how your participation has created value.

### Specific value-creation stories

A typical value-creation story has a sequence of four main steps, and sometimes five: (1) the activity you participated in, (2) what you gained out of it, (3) how you applied it, and (4) what the outcome was.

Sometimes, there is a step (5). This is when an event or innovation changes the way that you define what matters, what consists success, and therefore what “value creation” is. For instance, if you are a teacher, a successful activity may redefine what grades should be about. This type of fundamental reconsideration does not happen very often, but if it does happened to you because of your participation in a network or community, do include it in your story, because these moments tend to be quite significant in our lives

### Use of the template: five steps

Use this template for concrete examples of value creation. For instance, if in the first template you said that your network helped you become a better music teacher, then this second template can be used to provide some concrete examples of how the network did that. As an example you might want to describe how someone shared a good idea for an activity which you used in your classroom and which ended up making your lessons more engaging:

1. In the first row you would describe the moment at a meeting or in a conversation when someone shared that idea. Where were you? What happened?
2. In the second row you would describe the idea itself. What was it about? Why did you find it potentially useful?
3. In the third row, describe how you used that idea in your own teaching. How did you apply it and to what purpose? Did you need to adapt it? What happened in the classroom?
4. In the fourth row, describe what the outcome was (a) for your own success and/or (b) for the success of your school or district. Did it improve the student's understanding? Were they able to become engaged with a new concept? Did they do better on their test? Was their grades affected? Were the metrics of your schools improved?
5. Use row 5 if the event made you reconsider what counts as success.

You can use this storytelling guide for as many specific value-creation stories as you want to share.

Value-creation story: filled-out example for a teacher

Name	The math network
Typical cycles	Your story:
<p>1. <b>Activity:</b> Describe a meaningful activity you participated in and your experience of it (e.g., a conversation, a working session, a project, etc.)</p>	<p><i>I was attending a teacher's meeting and everyone there was quite engaged in the conversation. Someone was describing his difficulties getting kids to understand the idea underlying the Pythagorean theorem and its applications. A teacher from Utrecht told us about an activity she has been using. I thought it sounded really good. I and some other teachers became quite excited and asked a lot of questions. We spent the rest of the meeting on it.</i></p>
<p>2. <b>Output:</b> Describe a specific resource this activity produced for you (e.g., an idea or a document) and why you thought it might be useful.</p>	<p><i>The idea of the activity is to get the kids to work in small groups, doing puzzles with pieces of cardboard of different sizes of triangles. It is quite subtle because to get the idea of the theorem, they have to really fit all the pieces together and explain why it works. We actually tried the idea together as if we were students. She even gave us some templates so we could prepare the pieces of cardboard ourselves.</i></p>
<p>3. <b>Application:</b> Tell how you used this resource in your practice and what it enabled that would not have happened otherwise.</p>	<p><i>When I got home that evening, I started to prepare my own pieces of cardboard. I was really excited. Two weeks later, I used the activity with my third-grade class. It took a little while for them to get the idea. I had to adapt it a little bit because of the age of the students and I used a few pieces less. The class had really never been so attentive. The kids seemed quite happy when they left that day.</i></p>
<p>4. <b>Outcome:</b> a. <b>Personal:</b> Explain how it affected your success (e.g., being a better teacher, job satisfaction, student's grade) b. <b>Organizational:</b> Has your participation contributed to the success of your organization (e.g., metrics they use)</p>	<p><i>Two months later, when the kids took the national exam, I was in for a surprise. All but one got a perfect score on the chapter on triangles and the Pythagorean theorem. That had never happened to me. The headmaster called me in her office and told me that my kids had done so well, the school had received a letter from the testing service to ask whether there could have been some cheating. After we checked everything, I received some special mention in the national teacher registry.</i></p>
<p>5. <b>New definition of success:</b> Sometimes, such a story changes your understanding of what success is. If it happened this time, then include this here.</p>	<p><i>What I realized after that is that what mattered most for my kids was not just their ability to do the activities on the curriculum, but also to be involved with concepts practically so they have a deeper understanding of the ideas underlying the theorems they are learning.</i></p>

### Value-creation story: empty template for any professional

Note that the story does not need to start at 1, or go all the way to 5.

Name	
Typical cycles	Your story:
<p>1. <b>Activity:</b> Describe a meaningful activity you participated in and your experience of it (e.g., a conversation, a working session, a project, etc.)</p>	
<p>2. <b>Output:</b> Describe a specific resource this activity produced for you (e.g., an idea or a document) and why you thought it might be useful.</p>	
<p>3. <b>Application:</b> Tell how you used this resource in your practice and what it enabled that would not have happened otherwise.</p>	
<p>4. <b>Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>Personal:</b> Explain how it affected your success (e.g., being a better professional, job satisfaction,)</li> <li>b. <b>Organizational:</b> Has your participation contributed to the success of your organization (e.g., metrics they use)</li> </ul>	
<p>5. <b>New definition of success:</b> Sometimes, such a story changes your understanding of what success is. If it happened this time, then include this here.</p>	