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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT GUIDANCE

LAUNCHING A COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

USER GUIDE | VERSION 1.0

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1 Intended Audience

The intended audience of this document is a domain steward looking to bring together relevant stakeholders to create or foster a Community of Interest (COI).

2 Purpose

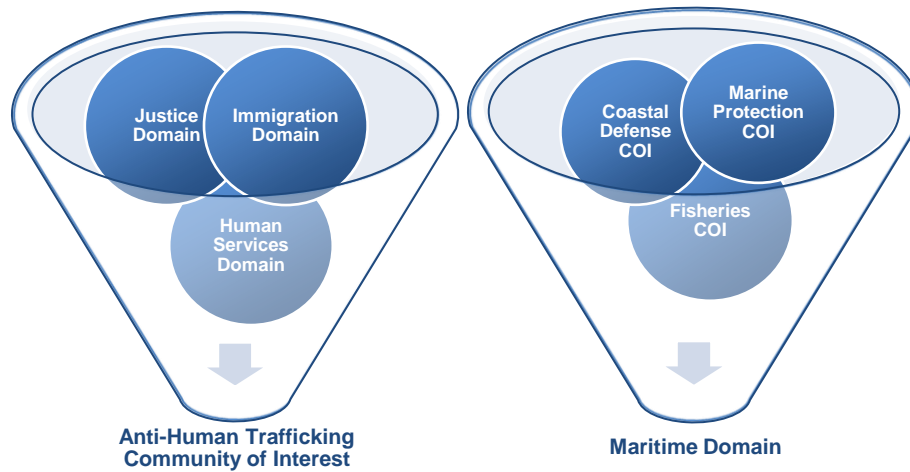
The purpose of this document is to provide domain stewards with guidance on how to develop and maintain an active COI while utilizing official National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) communication artifacts.

3 What is a Community of Interest?

As a community member of NIEM, your involvement could span a single domain or multiple domains. In addition, you do not need to be aligned to a formal NIEM domain to use NIEM. For example, NIEM core elements are universal and applicable to many or all.

A COI is a group of people who share a common concern, set of problems, or interest in a topic. In the context of NIEM, COIs come together based on a common need to exchange information in order to advance their missions.

COIs can be composed of multiple domains or can be a sub-set of a domain. For example, a multi-faceted issue, such as human trafficking, involves both law enforcement organizations to handle investigations, and immigration and social service organizations to provide victim assistance. Therefore, the anti-human trafficking community needs to include stakeholders from the Justice, Human Services, and Immigration domains. Conversely, a broadly scoped domain such as the Maritime domain could contain multiple COIs such as Coastal Defense, Marine Protection, and Fisheries. The graphic on the next page depicts these two examples.



4 How do Communities of Interest Form?

No common template exists for forming a COI. COIs are fluid in size, scope, and maturity, and can therefore form organically and unexpectedly. There are three general opportunities for COIs to form outlined below; however, the described avenues are not exhaustive.

- **Organic:** Stakeholders organically begin organizing themselves and sharing information around a specific concern, a set of problems, or a topic.
- **Directive:** A directive is issued from an authoritative body to create a COI.
- **Interest:** A member of the NIEM community has an interest in, or identifies a need for, a COI.

Example: **Organic Success Story**

The Health, Human Services, and Children, Youth, Family Services (CYFS) domains are currently using a shared collaboration site to exchange information and meet regularly to discuss harmonization.

5 Characteristics of a Strong Community of Interest

A strong COI includes an active set of stakeholders, with diversity of both representation and involvement, and a vested interest in furthering the mission of the COI.

- **Scope:** Any entity that has a vested interest in furthering the given COI's mission.
- **Stakeholders:** Groups of people composed of practitioners and technical representatives (government and private sector) who, by virtue of their organizational affiliation, day-to-day operational responsibilities, or provision of services and programs, have a stake in the given COI's NIEM information exchanges and who authoritatively represent their respective domains.
- **Active:** Consistent information sharing amongst the COI's stakeholders, which can include, but are not limited to:

- Program strategy
 - Relevant news
 - Business and technical requirements
 - Innovative solutions
 - Program feedback
 - Constructive criticism
- **Diversity of Representation:** Members are composed of representatives from a multitude of organizations at the local, state, federal, industry, and tribal levels. The exact composition of organizations involved in the COI will vary based on its mission area.
 - **Diversity of Involvement:** Involvement in the COI, be it communication, collaboration, or any effort to further the activity of the COI, is distributed amongst a diverse range of members.

6 Benefits of a Community of Interest

A strong COI will benefit and strengthen domains and the NIEM community. Benefits of creating and sustaining a COI include, but are not limited to:

- Connect people
- Stimulate learning
- Provide a shared context
- Enable dialogue
- Capture and diffuse existing knowledge
- Generate new knowledge
- Introduce collaborative processes
- Help people organize

7 Building a Strong Community of Interest

COIs are dynamic social structures that require cultivation so they can emerge and grow. The iterative process for domain stewards to establish and grow a strong COI is outlined below.

7.1 IDENTIFY

Identify your target audience, mission, and goals for the COI.

7.1.1 Process

Define Your Target Audience: Who are the COI's important stakeholders?

- **Origin of Stakeholders:** Stakeholders can come from all levels of government (federal, state, and local), private industry, and associations—all which can be either foreign or domestic in origin. The following examples are provided to spark creative thought about who could be involved in your COI:



<p>GOVERNMENT (Federal, State, and Local)</p> <p>The MassGangs initiative successfully used NIEM to support the exchange of information regarding criminal gangs and illegal organizations in Massachusetts by bringing together federal (Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance), state (Criminal History Systems Board), and local (local law enforcement units) government organizations.</p>	<p>PRIVATE INDUSTRY</p> <p>The Agriculture domain is collaborating with AgGateway, a consortium of businesses serving the agriculture industry, to promote the use of NIEM in order to share relevant agriculture and food supply chain information between the public and private sector.</p>
<p>ASSOCIATIONS</p> <p>The Education domain is co-stewarded by the Department of Education and Post-Secondary Electronic Standards Council, an education standards association.</p>	<p>INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS</p> <p>The Canadian, Mexican, and American federal governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to pilot NIEM as an international information sharing initiative. The first pilot, for Public Health, will focus on sharing information related to public health alerts for foodborne illnesses and diseases.</p>

Audiences within the Community of Interest: It is likely that there will be different audiences within a COI. Within a given organization, executives, developers, and implementers could all be considered stakeholders. These groups are considered different audiences within the COI because messaging for the executives will be different than messaging directed toward developers/implementers.

Define Your Mission: Given the intended audience, what is the COI's primary purpose?

NIEM Value Proposition: Agencies and organizations that adopt NIEM will be able to effectively serve the public by gaining faster access to current, accurate, and relevant information. NIEM can help:

- **Improve government effectiveness**
 - NIEM can improve the quality of government services by:
 - Providing a common framework for exchanging information that diverse communities can leverage to advance their mission.
 - Increasing the coordination between agencies, resulting in more informed and better delivery of programs and services.
 - Simplifying the process of applying for benefits.

Justice Domain's Mission Statement

Making the apprehension of criminals or terrorists more likely, thus providing safety and security to our nation and its citizens.

- **Improve government efficiency**

- NIEM can save taxpayers time and money by:
 - Cutting the cost to exchange information (e.g., by creating automated information exchanges with partners; leveraging existing systems and avoiding system replacement costs; and reusing IEPDs)
 - Increasing the speed and accuracy of information exchange. Important time-, money-, and life-saving decisions can be made in a matter of minutes, rather than days or weeks.
 - Eliminating the need to rekey data, reducing administrative burden and freeing up resources to perform more valuable services for the public.
 - Providing a forum for accelerating collaboration with the community and identifying common approaches and challenges to exchanging information.

Define Your Goals: What are the expected benefits to the stakeholders? What specific needs will the COI be organized to meet? Example goals include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote interest in the domain • Facilitate collaboration amongst domain stakeholders • Exchange NIEM and domain-specific news • Allow PMO and Domain Steward to solicit feedback • Connect people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture and diffuse existing knowledge • Introduce collaborative processes • Help people organize • Generate new knowledge • Enable dialogue • Stimulate learning • Provide a shared context |
|--|--|

7.1.2 Actions

- Define your target audience, purpose, and goals.
- Identify the major topic areas for community content and exploration.

7.1.3 Available Resources

- Helpful Links:
 - [List of Existing Domains](#) (to see what other domains are available for collaboration)
 - [NIEM Resources available](#) (to assist in identifying NIEM resources)
 - [National Information Sharing Standards Knowledge Base and Help Desk](#) (for all technical needs)
- Case studies (to provide examples of various organizations to be involved in a COI): [List of case studies from NIEM.gov](#).

7.2 DESIGN

Define the activities, technologies, and roles that will support the community's goals.

7.2.1. Process

Define the Activities: What kind of activities will generate activity within the COI? Example activities include, but are not limited to:

- Discussion threads on major topic areas for the COI within the [domain collaboration zone](#) section of NIEM.gov
- Newsletters
- Teleconferences
- COI spotlights on active members
- Face-to-face meetings/conferences

Define the Technologies: What technology will be used to interact with and facilitate conversations among stakeholders of the COI?

COIs should use four primary digital channels to drive collaboration and discussion:

- **NIEM.gov:** The hub of all technical NIEM related discussion. NIEM.gov’s discussion forums and collaboration zones are ideal for existing stakeholders to collaborate.
- **LinkedIn:** The largest organic NIEM discussion area. The NIEM LinkedIn group is composed of both NIEM users and potential users, making it both a prime location to discuss COIs, as well as to find new stakeholders.
- **Blogs:** Due to the informed audience, various IT blogs are excellent places to exchange ideas about best practices, as well as to recruit new stakeholders.
- **Twitter:** COI stakeholders can simply tweet about their COI—the more information about COI online, the better.

While these four digital media channels are ideal for the exchange of ideas and recruitment of new stakeholders, the most reliable recruitment channel is in person networking. The professional networks of COI members likely contain peers who could benefit the COI by becoming active members.

Define the Roles: What are the roles necessary to create a strong COI and who will fill those roles? Listed below are example roles and responsibilities to provide a general idea of how a COI can function:

- **NIEM Brand Champion Program members:** Evangelize NIEM as a whole through various digital channels.
- **COI Brand Champion Program members:** Evangelize the COI digitally and assists with onboarding of new users.
- **All COI members:** Contribute to group discussions, promote the COI, and recruit new users.

7.2.2 Actions

- Determine roles and associated used technologies, and identify members of the COI or recruit new members to fulfill these roles and responsibilities.
- Generate a tentative schedule for the COI including frequency of communication.
- Create a contact list of potential stakeholders.

7.2.3 Available Resources

- NIEM templates ([Collateral and Templates](#), [Branding](#), [Image Library](#), [Logos and Models](#))
- General [NIEM information](#) (for recruitment purposes)
- Searchable [Glossary](#) of NIEM-related terms

7.3 LAUNCH

Roll out the COI by conducting outreach activities with the stakeholders defined in the Identify stage and execute on the activities and technologies outlined in the Design stage.

7.3.1 Process

Outreach: How do new members learn about the community?

- **Digital Channels:** LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, and other digital channels with informed audiences are excellent locations to evangelize the COI. Outreach should be targeted to informed and applicable audiences, and not done en masse.
- **Brand Champion Program Members and COI Stakeholders:** Just as COIs can form organically, so can their growth. The most effective endorsement is from a satisfied customer, which is why stakeholders will be key to promoting their COI.

Orientation: How do members become oriented to the new environment?

- **Introductory message:** The welcome message should include the COI's statement of purpose, description of stakeholders, and other relevant documents.
- **Outreach documents:** The welcome message should include a number of outreach documents, such as (but not limited to): NIEM information, COI information, relevant case studies, etc.
- **Brand Champion Program members:** New COI members should know the Brand Champion Program members for that COI and can use them as a point of contact.
- **Digital Channels:** Going to channels utilized by the COI and reading and participating in digital discussions is the best way to learn about the COI. Discussions on LinkedIn and NIEM.gov are excellent starting points.

7.3.2 Actions

- Send welcome notice to new stakeholders.
- Prioritize what channels the COI will use for discussions.
- Publicize these discussion channels through outreach channels (networking, Twitter, blogs, etc.).
- Create a COI collaboration zone on NIEM.gov.
- Publish schedule of relevant activities, conferences, and meetings related to the COI on the COI collaboration zone group calendar.

7.3.3 Available Resources

The NIEM Communications Toolkit has the necessary resources to successfully launch a COI. Of particular interest to a newly forming COI are the following resources.

- [Communications Toolkit](#) (features templates and information for new users)
 - [NIEM templates](#) (to tailor recruitment information)
 - General [NIEM information](#) (for recruitment purposes)

7.4 GROW

The NIEM PMO plans to release an accompanying document shortly that will provide specific guidance and instructions on how to communicate effectively with your COI.

In order to continue to grow membership and diversity of stakeholders within a COI, it is important to engage existing and new members in collaborative learning and knowledge sharing activities, group projects, and networking events to increase participation and contribution.

7.4.1 Process

Growth Strategies: What strategies can I employ to grow both membership and involvement?

- **Brokering:** A broker is someone who is familiar with important stakeholders in the community. He or she can create opportunities that make connections between groups more likely by:
 - Bringing people together to exchange information and to work together.
 - Creating opportunities for groups to communicate and understand each other's needs and abilities.
 - Facilitating connections that make ongoing or deeper work more likely.
- **Coalescing Around Issues:** Coalescing around issues is a strategy that can help groups move beyond their own position and find commonalities with other groups. It involves realigning the discussion around common interests. Diverse views are redefined as strengths that can be expressed through a common commitment to shared interests.
- **Leading from All Levels:** Creating opportunities for participants to share knowledge and raise issues encourages the growth of leadership at different levels. It also helps to sustain work by providing a safety net when the leadership changes. When encouraging leading from all levels, consider the following tips:
 - Seek to understand the interest of other stakeholders and establish conditions so that these groups interact, find commonality, and see the benefit in allied action.
 - Select, organize, present, and deliver information in a way that makes it more consumable by and need fulfilling for various stakeholders.
 - Develop an interactive process for gathering stakeholder input at all levels.

7.4.2 Actions

- Continue to monitor the following programs for opportunities to further engage existing or new stakeholders:
 - Efficiency of COI **Brand Champion Program members**.
 - Quality of welcome email and attached outreach documents.
 - Use of digital channels for recruitment and stakeholder collaboration.

7.4.3 Available Resources

- **COI Brand Champion Program members:**

- Driving interest in the COI and attracting diverse stakeholders
 - Recruitment of new users
 - Participating in existing stakeholder discussions
- COI stakeholders:
 - Recruitment of new users
 - Participating in existing stakeholder discussions
- [Communications Toolkit:](#)
 - Holds information and templates for the recruitment of new users
- [NIEM Customer Request form:](#)
 - Allows COI to edit NIEM.gov via submitting a request to website administrator