Democracy and Economic Change
Your Connection...

Engage others, exchange stories

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The International Civil Society Consortium for Public Deliberation (ICSC) is an international, nonprofit network of civic organizations from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, and Africa whose main focus is to enhance cooperation in promoting responsible democratic institutions and public deliberation around the world.

In an effort to further define, support, and encourage collaborations within the consortium, its Web site has been redesigned—www.icscpd.org. The new Web site offers a more engaging experience for the members and supporters of the consortium. By adding new capabilities, its members have the ability to collaborate more effectively, allowing the consortium to provide a more robust presence.

Members of ICSC have been gathering since 1991, when they started meeting informally under the coordination of the Kettering Foundation. Since then, the network has grown to include civil society activists, researchers and academics representing nongovernmental organizations, university departments, foundations, and journals. The following countries are currently represented in ICSC: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo/FRY, Lebanon, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the United States, Yemen, and Yugoslavia. Their primary goal is to enhance international cooperation in promoting responsible, democratic, and widely participatory deliberation over public issues around the world. The consortium believes that such deliberation is essential for the reinforcement of democratic progress and welcomes the inclusion of other organizations.

Today, ICSC members regularly participate in exchanges to learn from one another and to strengthen democratic practice by enriching democratic thought.
The International Civil Society Consortium for Public Deliberation.Org

Our challenge is to spur new interest in the site from people in the network, who historically have not stayed in contact outside of KF-related events. . . . We aim to create an online space where people in the network can engage and support one another.

The advantage we have in this area is that the fellows rotate out approximately every five months. This gives us an opportunity to review the process and make adjustments in between each group of fellows. It also removes the often-tedious aspects of breaking established work patterns and approaches in order to refine the processes.

Additionally, when we become aware of fellows who are not returning immediately to full-time work in their home country, we have the option of enlisting them to continue their efforts on our behalf even after they have left the United States. From the fellows’ perspective, and from the perspective of prospective employers, the investment of time in this pursuit demonstrates commitment and work ethic that will contribute to the fellows’ attractiveness as potential employees, as well as introducing the fellows’ employers to our work.

2. Capitalizing on already existing groups of former fellows and others who are already collaborating on a variety of initiatives.

The consortium’s Web site has the capacity to offer the initial structures and collaborative environment and tools that people need in such instances.

There is a web of good relationships that have been developing for years with some of the participants in one endeavor or another. Capitalizing on these relationships and using the forums and communications that were passed back-and-forth in the production of, let’s say, a new publication, we can translate this into a model to demonstrate how the site can be used to facilitate collaborations of this type in the future.

For example: A newly drafted chapter has been prepared by a member and is ready for review and input from the larger group. By posting the new chapter in the online Discussion area that has been created for this group, an area that only the assigned participants can access, they can give their feedback in a threaded discussion format.

3. Defining areas of expertise and professional experience among the members and creating specific centers of collaboration to match, complete with sample material demonstrating experience and expertise.

For example: Not all ICSC member organizations have an expertise or focus in journalism, so if a member is looking to start a new initiative in this area, it would be helpful for them to know specifically who in the consortium to contact for collaboration.

The primary mission of the ICSC Web site is to offer yet another venue to exchange insights and knowledge. Any contribution is welcome; we look forward to having various perspectives, as well as many questions, to allow for an authentic and professional exchange to unfold.

Ileana Marin is a senior program associate at the Kettering Foundation. She can be reached at imarin@kettering.org.

www.icscpd.org
A Different Kind of Politics: Readings on the Role of Higher Education in Democracy

edited by Derek W. M. Barker and David W. Brown

A Different Kind of Politics presents Kettering Foundation research on the democratic implications of the civic engagement movement in higher education. The contributions reflect on efforts to treat students as active learners and engaged citizens, undertake new forms of professionalism that treat citizens as the primary actors in politics, and build genuinely democratic relationships with communities.

Contributors featured in this book include:

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The foundation today continues in that tradition. The objective of the research now is to study what helps democracy work as it should. Six major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required to strengthen public life.

Kettering is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) research organization supported by an endowment. For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation’s Web site at www.kettering.org.

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