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Participatory Culture

A process area at Maturity Level 3: Defined

Purpose **The purpose of a Participatory Culture allows the organization to exploit the full capability of the workforce for making decisions that affect the performance of business activities.**

Description The open communication established with Communication and Coordination practices at the Managed Level creates a foundation for developing a participatory culture. A participatory culture provides an environment in which competent professionals are fully able to exercise their capabilities. This participative environment ensures a flow of information within the organization, incorporates the knowledge of individuals into decision-making processes, and gains their support for commitments. Establishing a participatory culture lays the foundation for building high-performance workgroups and for empowering workgroups at the Predictable Level.

Establishing a participatory culture begins with providing individuals and workgroups with information about organizational and unit performance, and how their performance contributes. Individuals and workgroups are provided access to the information needed to perform their committed work. Information and communication systems support these information needs.

The structure of decision-making processes is analyzed across the organization and appropriate roles are defined. Based on this analysis, decisions are delegated to an appropriate location in the organization that balances competence, coordination, and speed. Once made by appropriate individuals, decisions are supported by others in the organization. Individuals participate in decisions that affect their work and work environment. Individuals and workgroups use defined processes for making decisions and resolving conflicts and disputes.

Goals

- Goal 1** Information about business activities and results is communicated throughout the organization.
- Goal 2** Decisions are delegated to an appropriate level of the organization.
- Goal 3** Individuals and workgroups participate in structured decision-making processes.
- Goal 4** Participatory Culture practices are institutionalized to ensure they are performed as defined organizational processes.

Commitment to Perform

- Commitment 1** The organization's stated values encourage open communication and participation in decision making by individuals and workgroups, when appropriate.

Refer to Commitment 1 of the Communication and Coordination process area for information regarding the establishment and communication of organizational values, and the types of the workforce issues that might be covered in the organization's stated values.

- Commitment 2** The organization establishes and maintains a documented policy for its activities that supports the development of a participatory culture.

Issues typically addressed in the policy include:

1. Activities that support development of a participatory culture serve the business objectives and stated values of the organization.
2. Individuals and workgroups participate in decision-making processes affecting their work.
3. Information about organizational and business performance is shared across the organization.
4. There is an environment of open communication across levels and among individuals and workgroups within the organization.
5. Open communication appropriately considers the cultural values and diversity present in the workforce.
6. Individuals and workgroups are actively encouraged and supported to assume appropriate responsibility and authority by participating in decision-making processes.
7. Activities that support development of a participatory culture comply with relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies.

Commitment 3

An organizational role(s) is assigned responsibility for coordinating the organization’s activities for developing a participatory culture.

Examples of individuals who might be assigned responsibilities for activities that support development of a participatory culture include the following:

- Executive management
- Staff assistants
- Committees
- Human resources or other appropriate professionals
- Organizational development specialists

Ability to Perform

Ability 1 **Within each unit, an individual(s) is assigned responsibility and authority to ensure that the performance of business and workforce activities within the unit contributes to developing a participatory culture.**

Ability 2 **Adequate resources are provided for performing activities that support development of a participatory culture.**

1. Strategic and operational business objectives are defined and made available.
2. Performance results are collected at the organizational and unit levels.
3. Experienced individuals who have expertise in areas such as decision analysis and communication are made available.
4. Resources that contribute to a participatory culture are made available.

Examples of resources supporting participatory activities include the following:

- Information
- Information systems
- Internal publications
- Decision aids

5. Adequate support is made available for participatory activities.

Examples of participatory activities include the following:

- Decision-making processes
- Communication processes
- Conflict resolution processes

6. Adequate funding is made available for resources that contribute to a participatory culture.

Ability 3

Managers develop the knowledge, skills, and process abilities needed to perform their responsibilities regarding communication and participatory management.

Examples of relevant topics in which managers may be trained include the following:

- Commitment processes
- Consensus-building skills
- Participatory management techniques
- Decision-making techniques
- Group problem-solving techniques
- Listening skills
- Information analysis and communication techniques
- Work coordination techniques

Ability 4

Individuals and groups who participate in Participatory Culture activities receive the preparation in problem-solving and decision-making processes, methods, and skills appropriate to the types of decisions they will participate in making.

Ability 5

The practices and procedures for developing a participatory culture are defined and documented.

1. Practices and procedures may be defined and documented at the organizational and/or unit levels, as appropriate.
2. Guidelines for tailoring the practices and procedures for use in different circumstances are documented and made available as necessary.

3. The individual(s) assigned responsibility for coordinating activities to develop a participatory culture across the organization ensures that defined practices and procedures are:
 - maintained under version control,
 - disseminated through appropriate media,
 - interpreted appropriately for different situations, and
 - updated through orderly methods.
4. Experiences, lessons learned, measurement results, and improvement information derived from planning and performing the practices for developing a participatory culture are captured to support the future use and improvement of the organization's practices.

Practices Performed

Practice 1

Information about organizational and unit performance is made available to individuals and workgroups.

1. Management at each level of the organization identifies information about organizational and unit performance that would assist individuals, workgroups, or units in aligning their decisions and business activities with that level's business objectives or commitments.

Examples of information on organizational performance that could be made available to individuals, workgroups, or units include the following:

- Business objectives and strategy
- Performance objectives of other units and the organization
- Financial results and projections
- Information about costs and expenses
- Production data and results
- Quality objectives and results
- Workforce attitude results
- Customer satisfaction and related information
- Marketing, sales, and related information

2. Designated information about organizational and unit performance is:
 - summarized at an appropriate level of detail for use by individuals, workgroups, or units,
 - communicated to individuals, workgroups, or units using methods that make the information readily accessible and useful for decision making or other business activities, and
 - revised with a frequency appropriate to the rate of change for each type of information.
3. The workforce is made aware of the extent to which different forms of performance information must be treated as confidential.

Practice 2

Individuals and workgroups are made aware of how their work performance contributes to unit and organizational performance.

1. Individual performance feedback is presented in the context of workgroup, unit, and organizational performance.
2. Workgroup performance feedback is presented in the context of unit and organizational performance.
3. Links among individual, workgroup, unit, and organizational performance are explained.
4. Links between organizational performance and the achievement of organizational business objectives are communicated and reinforced.

Practice 3**Individuals and workgroups have access to information needed to perform their committed work.**

1. Individuals and workgroups identify information:
 - they need for performing their work, and
 - others need from them.

Examples of sources for identifying needed information include the following:

- Assigned tasks and responsibilities
- Standard processes
- Workgroup coordination
- Assigned or assumed roles
- Dependencies within a workflow

2. Individuals and workgroups identify the most effective mechanisms for transferring needed information.
3. Individuals and workgroups coordinate with information sources to ensure timely access to required information.
4. Managers and supervisors ensure that the information requirements of those they supervise are satisfied.
5. Competency-based experience and information captured within a competency community is made available to other individuals or workgroups that have a need for this information.

Practice 4 Information and communication systems support the information needs of individuals and workgroups.

These information and communication technologies extend beyond the basic functions of the management information systems used for managing the business. The purpose of these information technologies is to make management information accessible to every individual or workgroup who can use it for making faster and more accurate decisions. The purpose of the communication technologies described in this practice is to broaden and accelerate the flow of information needed to enhance work performance and the speed and accuracy of decisions.

1. Within boundaries defined by organizational, budgetary, and relevant technical considerations, information and communication technologies are provided to individuals and workgroups to support their information and communication needs.
2. Individuals and workgroups participate in the selection and design of information and communication technologies to ensure their needs are met.
3. Information and communication technologies are:
 - implemented to meet the needs of individuals and workgroups,
 - maintained, and
 - enhanced over time, as appropriate.
4. Individuals and workgroups participate in decisions about improvements and upgrades to the information and communication technologies that they use.

Practice 5 The structure of decision-making processes within the organization is analyzed.

Decision processes may be analyzed in numerous ways. The decision analysis described in this practice may occur through several mechanisms that are not necessarily concurrent. In addition, decision processes in different components or at different levels of the organization may be analyzed separately. Examples of how decision analysis processes may be applied in an organization include the following:

- Through formal analysis of existing decision making processes
- As part of designing workflows and management controls
- As part of defining workgroup processes
- As part of defining competency-based processes
- In policies or procedures
- In defining roles and responsibilities
- In establishing units or workgroups
- In designing the organization or its components

1. Decisions to be analyzed are identified.

Decisions to be analyzed are characterized by attributes such as the following:

- Are recurrent
- Affect work commitments or assignments
- Affect career opportunities
- Impact how work is done
- Create or affect dependencies with other individuals or workgroups
- Affect the work environment
- Affect significant stakeholders who are not involved in the decision process

2. Identified decisions are analyzed to determine which roles or workgroups:
 - have the most relevant information for making the decision,
 - can make the most timely and accurate decision,
 - are in the best position to involve all relevant stakeholders,
 - share dependencies affected by the decision,
 - need to be involved in providing input to or reviewing the decision, and
 - need to be informed of the results of the decision.
3. Individuals, workgroups, or units at each level of the organization are involved in analyzing decisions made at their level.

Examples of different types of decisions include the following:

- Independent decisions, which are decisions where the individual or group making the decision has full authority to make it without seeking advice or consent from anyone else
- Coordinated decisions, which are decisions where the individual or workgroup making the decision has the authority to make the decision, but only with input or approval from other parties
- Consensus decisions, which are decisions where the decision reached must be one that can be supported by a defined set of individuals or groups before it is announced

Practice 6**Decision-making processes and roles are defined.**

1. The organization develops or adopts standard decision-making methods for use with different types of decisions.

A decision-making method is a specific procedure for making a decision that can be embedded in the work processes of an individual, workgroup, or unit. Examples of decision-making methods include the following:

- Consensus development
- Structured problem solving
- Hoshin planning or policy deployment
- Nominal group technique
- Force field analysis
- Voting or multi-voting techniques
- Brainstorming
- Delphi

2. Decision-making methods are embedded in defined processes that are appropriate for the situation or business activities being performed.

Sources of defined processes in which decision-making methods can be embedded include the following:

- Competency-based processes
- Workgroup operating processes
- Business or workflow-based processes
- Customer-specified processes

3. Decision-making processes are defined within the context of the business activities and processes they affect.

Decision-making processes are defined and represented in a format that is consistent with the definitions of processes within which they are embedded. Thus, decision-making becomes a component of a standard competence-based or workgroup operating process.

Elements of decision-making processes that may be defined include the following:

- Conditions under which the need for the decision is triggered
- Inputs needed for the decision and roles that provide them
- Roles to be involved in the decision-making process
- Methods for identifying root causes
- Methods for identifying or clarifying the decision needed
- Methods for generating alternative solutions
- Methods for selecting appropriate solutions
- Methods for planning to implement decisions
- Requirements for coordination of the decision with other roles or processes that share dependencies
- Review and approval procedures, if required
- Communication requirements
- Outputs of the decision-making process
- Methods for evaluating decision outcomes
- Methods for reconsidering previous decisions
- How the decision-making process is integrated into competency-based, workgroup, or other business processes
- Guidelines for tailoring the decision-making process or method
- Methods for evaluating decisions to improve the accuracy or quality of future decisions

Practice 7 Responsibilities for decisions are delegated to appropriate levels and locations in the organization.

1. The most appropriate roles or workgroups for participating in and making various decisions are identified.

Examples of criteria for identifying roles or workgroups to delegate decisions to at appropriate levels include the following:

- Speed and timeliness
- Availability and accuracy of information
- Responsibility for results
- Breadth of decision impact
- Competency
- Decision dependencies
- Coordination of work processes
- Legal responsibilities

2. Authority and responsibility for decision-making are delegated to lower levels of the organization when feasible and appropriate by the nature of the decision.
3. Executives initiate participatory decision processes by analyzing and delegating appropriate decisions at their level.

Practice 8 Individuals and workgroups use defined decision-making processes.

1. Standard decision-making methods, roles, and processes are tailored for their most effective use based on the characteristics of the situation in which they are used.

Decision-making methods, roles, and processes may need to be tailored to ensure they are appropriate for use in a specific project or situation. As part of planning their work activities, individuals, workgroups, or units should perform any tailoring of decision-making processes required to involve all parties and to ensure that all parties have accurate expectations about how decisions will be reached.

Examples of issues to be considered in tailoring decision-making processes include the following:

- Who is accountable for the results of the decision
- Who has information relevant to the decision
- Who must support the decision
- Whose work activities are affected by the decision
- Whose activities the decision must be coordinated with
- Who must approve the actions resulting from the decision
- How quickly the decision must be implemented
- Whether anyone will be disenfranchised by the decision

2. Roles in the decision-making process are assigned to appropriate individuals or workgroups in planning their work processes.
3. Those with management or supervisory responsibility for individuals or workgroups involved in decision-making processes ensure that they are prepared for their responsibilities.

Examples of knowledge and skills that are prerequisites to exercising decision-making responsibility include the following:

- Knowing information needed to make the decision
- Being able to execute an appropriate decision-making process
- Understanding the basis of the authority they exercise in making the decision
- Understanding the limits of their empowerment for making decisions
- Understanding how to implement the decision

4. Individuals or groups perform their roles as defined or tailored when participating in making decisions.
5. Data and other inputs relevant to a decision are provided to those involved in the decision process.
6. Decisions are communicated and coordinated as necessary.
7. When decisions are reconsidered, appropriate decision-making processes are used.

8. Decisions are evaluated to identify factors that could improve the speed or accuracy of the decisions, when appropriate in an individual, competency-based, workgroup, or a unit work process.

Examples of factors that could improve decision-making include the following:

- Use of different decision-making methods
- More effective tailoring of decision-making processes
- Involving fewer or more individuals or workgroups
- More accurate or timely inputs
- More effective coordination of concurrent decision-making processes
- More effective or timely review or approval of decisions when required
- More effective or timely implementation of decisions

Practice 9

Decisions made by those empowered to make them are supported by others in the organization.

Decision-making processes must be defined and understood so that expectations about authority and responsibility are not violated.

1. Individuals responsible for individuals, workgroups, or units empowered to make or participate in decisions:
 - maintain awareness of decision-making processes to ensure that conditions affecting decision-making such as accuracy of inputs, level of competence or experience, and time allotted are appropriate to support accurate and timely decisions,
 - take corrective action when conditions affecting decision-making need to be improved, and
 - ensure that necessary coordination of decisions with relevant stakeholders occurs.
2. Issues or decisions that cannot be resolved according to defined decision-making processes are raised to decision-makers at higher levels for resolution.

3. When business or other conditions suggest that decisions be altered, changed, or reversed, management communicates with and involves those empowered to make the decision(s) affected.

Practice 10

Individuals and workgroups are involved in making decisions that affect their work.

1. When appropriate, input is sought from the workforce on important decisions affecting the whole organization.
2. Individuals or workgroups participate in developing and reviewing organizational policies, plans, and procedures that affect them.
3. Individuals or workgroups participate in making decisions about how to organize and perform their work through involvement, where appropriate, in:
 - identifying problems or issues,
 - generating alternatives,
 - selecting a solution,
 - planning the implementation of the selected solution, and
 - evaluating the results.
4. The rationale behind a decision is communicated to those affected by the decision.

Practice 11

Individuals and groups participate in decisions concerning their work environments.

1. Individuals and groups provide input for:
 - the arrangement of work facilities,
 - alterations or improvements to their work environment, and
 - resources needed to perform their work.
2. To the extent reasonable, individuals and groups participate in decisions about work resources and their work environment.
3. To the extent reasonable, individuals and workgroups arrange their work environment to best support their work processes.

Practice 12**Defined mechanisms are used for resolving conflicts and disputes.**

1. The organization defines decision-making processes through which different types of conflicts or disputes can be resolved.

Examples of different types of conflicts or disputes that should have defined processes for deciding resolution may include the following:

- Resource contention among units or workgroups
- Scheduling difficulties
- Conflicts among commitments
- Budget or other financial issues
- Interpersonal problems
- Personnel matters
- Coordination problems
- Legal or ethical issues
- Issues involving business strategy or tactics

2. Appropriate problem-solving opportunities are made available for individuals or workgroups to resolve problems, issues, conflicts, or disputes that affect their work.
3. Conflicts and disputes are addressed through appropriate conflict and dispute resolution processes.

Conflict and dispute resolution processes typically address the following:

- Initiation
- Participants and roles
- Presentation of arguments and information
- Decision-making procedures
- Methods for review and appeal, if appropriate
- Safeguards to ensure fairness, confidentiality, respect for individuals, and alignment with the organization's objectives

4. Appropriate stakeholders are involved in conflict and dispute resolution processes.
5. Results of conflict and dispute resolution processes are communicated and implemented.

Measurement and Analysis

Measurement 1

Measurements are made and used to determine the status and performance of participatory activities and trends within the organization.

Examples of measurements include the following:

- Measures of the use and coverage of information and communication technologies
- Rate at which decisions are delegated within the organization
- Rate at which decision-making processes are defined and trained
- Number of people involved in decision-making processes
- Effectiveness of communication mechanisms
- Amount of business information communicated to the workforce
- Number of conflict or dispute resolutions
- Results from opinion feedback mechanisms

Measurement 2 **Measurements are made and used to determine the effectiveness of the participatory practices adopted in the organization.**

Examples of measurements of the effectiveness of participatory practices include the following:

- Results of decisions
- Improvements in motivation and morale
- Number of people actively seeking involvement in decision making
- The quality of the information available for decisions
- The speed of making decisions
- Improvements in timeliness or accuracy of decisions over time
- The speed of implementing decisions
- Number and extent of coordination problems
- Timeliness and success of conflict or dispute resolutions

Verifying Implementation

Verification 1 **A responsible individual(s) verifies that communication and decision-making activities within the organization are conducted in an open and participative manner according to the organization's values and policies; and addresses noncompliance.**

These reviews verify that:

1. Communication and decision-making activities comply with the organization's policies and stated values.
2. Communication and decision-making activities comply with relevant laws and regulations.

3. Individuals and groups are involved in communication and decision-making processes, where appropriate.
4. Noncompliance issues are handled appropriately.

Verification 2

Executive management periodically reviews the level of participatory behavior and resolves issues.

These reviews verify:

1. The level of open communication, delegation of decision-making, and participatory behavior in the organization.
2. The appropriate use of business objectives and performance information.
3. The involvement of all appropriate stakeholders in decision and commitment processes.
4. Progress in performing Participatory Culture activities.
5. Results from reviews of Participatory Culture practices and activities performed to develop a participatory culture.

Refer to Verification 1 for information regarding reviews of Participatory Culture activities to ensure adherence to the following:

- Relevant laws and regulations
- Organizational policies, practices, and procedures

6. Status of resolution of noncompliance issues.
7. Trends related to the development of a participatory culture.
8. Effectiveness of Participatory Culture activities in achieving the development of a participatory culture.

