

B R I E F

Background

The [Data for Nutrition \(DfN\) community of practice \(CoP\)](#) was launched by a group of stakeholders under the leadership of Data for Decisions to Expand Nutrition Transformation (DataDENT). Since December 2019, DfN has aimed to provide “members with opportunities to share knowledge, experience and questions relevant to strengthening the nutrition data value chain (DVC) at all levels for the purposes of achieving better nutritional outcomes in low- and middle-income countries.” The virtual platform is hosted using Mobilize which includes features such as email-enabled reply, member directories, calendars, discussion boards, file repositories, and member-to-member chat function. The platform is structured around six pages or “groups”: [Open Forum](#), [Webinars](#), [DfN Notice Board](#), [Jobs & Opportunities](#), [Introductions](#), [Moderated Topics](#).

The [DfN YouTube Channel](#) livestreams and archives webinars. In 2020, the community launched a Twitter account ([@Data4Nutrition](#)) to further extend the COP’s reach.

Between October 2021 and March 2022, an independent consultant, conducted a formative evaluation of DfN in order to:

1. inform decisions about the continuation of the CoP beyond the life of the current DataDENT grant (i.e., August 2021), and
2. identify ways that the aims, design and administration of the CoP can be improved to better meet member needs and enhance the user experience.

Methods



Key informant (KI) interviews: In October 2021, the consultant conducted key informant interviews with ten participants purposively selected based on information provided in their registration form. Respondents were selected to include 1) representatives of launch team institutions, 2) active users¹, and 3) less-active users² as well as geographic region. Open-ended questions were used to understand members’ motivation for joining, perspectives on DfN’s mission and goals, experiences navigating the platform, and recommendations for improvements.



Online Survey (OS): Between December 2021 and January 2022, a brief online survey was distributed to all community members and affiliates through DfN platforms (e.g., Mobilize, Twitter, webpage). The survey used structured response questions (e.g., Likert scale) to expand on the topics addressed in the individual interviews.

1 Members who have created a post, appreciated a post, or commented at least 1 post.

2 Members who receive community communications, but have not created, appreciated, or commented on any posts.



Data analytics and content review: We reviewed content posted between December 2019 and 7 March 2022, and tabulated analytics around member characteristics, member engagement, webinars and coordinated events using data provided by our platforms (i.e., Mobilize, YouTube, and Twitter).

Key Findings

Topic 1: Motivation for joining

Overall, KIs were motivated to join the DfN CoP because the community aligns with their professional/personal interests. At least two-thirds of OS respondents identified connecting with others working on nutrition data (76%), keeping current on related advances (76%), sharing or obtaining resources (66%), engaging in discussions (71%), and sharing and/or learning about relevant global or regional events (76%) as motivation.

Topic 2: Engagement with the platform

Most OS respondents (82%) use a laptop to access DfN CoP and more than half (52%) used mobile phones. More than half of respondents received DfN emails sent by Mobilize (62%) and/or logged into Mobilize via a web browser (52%). One-third of OS respondents had used the mobile app (32%) and the same number reported engaging through Twitter.

Most of the KIs (80%) contributed material to the platform. Among OS respondents, only 29% said they were 'very' comfortable posting to the Open Forum and another 25% said they were 'somewhat' comfortable posting. Most OS respondents reported being willing to share their work or a relevant topic in a webinar (81%), participating in a panel discussion (70%), and/or facilitating a discussion with others on a nutrition data issue (71%). Several of the KIs (30%) recommended hosting more Moderated Topics as a way to stimulate involvement.

Language and internet connectivity were the most salient barriers to engagement reported by KIs. Over half of the OS respondents (51%) said English met their needs; however, other language requests included Spanish (20%) and French (10%) among others (Portuguese, Hindi, Arabic, Hausa, and Yoruba). Eastern United States (34%) or Central Africa/Europe (24%) time zones were the most commonly reported by OS respondents. Time zone may be a barrier to increasing engagement among those based in Southeast and Central Asia.

Topic 3: Use of platform to support networking

KIs suggested members lack awareness of features for networking, such as the Member Directory and Introductions and Jobs & Opportunities message boards. A third (32%) of OS respondents had used the Member Directory to find contact information for other DfN members and the same number invited someone to join the CoP; 39% of OS respondents connected with another CoP member through Mobilize features.

Topic 4: Increased access to nutrition data and information system knowledge and/or resources

Most KIs learned about resources first through platform emails and Twitter. Most OS respondents said that they learned about new content through the DfN (80%) and that generally content including webinars (78%) and job or professional opportunities posted (53%) are relevant to them.

Topic 5: Perspectives on the future of the DfN CoP

KIs and OS respondents supported the continuation of the DfN CoP. They encouraged frequent reminders about how to engage with DfN.

Recommendations

- **Foster more involvement from early to mid-career professionals.** Some early to mid-career members expressed some reticence to present or share their own work. The CoP could feature some early to mid-career members' work in future webinars.

- **Expand the reach of the community.** Specifically, KIs commented on expanding low- and middle-income country membership, not just nutrition data people, and regions that are not all English-speaking.
- **Invite participation in collaborative endeavors.** Respondents provided a list of potential projects that the CoP could engage in together including restarting Moderated Topics, developing guidelines related to nutrition data use, creating a research agenda, and developing capacity building tools.
- **Clarify the meaning and opportunities of membership.** KIs expressed enthusiasm for the group and supported more efforts aimed at fostering a greater sense of community.

For more information, access the full evaluation report and study tools on our website:

<https://datadent.org/data-for-nutrition-evaluation/>

Additional feedback and ideas for strengthening the CoP are welcome. Share your ideas at:

<https://datadent.org/contact/>

About this Brief

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