Introduction to 2020 SRV Revitalisation Plan: Context/Challenges, Our Plan, & Roles

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Australian SRV Association formed as a group of experienced SRV teachers and practitioners in 1993 to formally guide and protect SRV in Australia. The group accredits teachers of SRV (Senior Trainers), protects the materials, has recently conducted some research into practitioner experiences, and had The 2020 Australian SRV Gathering ready to run in late March but alas the virus hit!

SRV is a highly helpful theory, with many implications for a very useful practice framework. Nevertheless, the teaching and informed application of SRV theory is under threat. Currently, ASRVA (a purely voluntary, informal national organisation) along with four similarly voluntary SRV State/Local Groups, are trying to keep SRV alive. There is support in this through two Senior Trainers and a small number of modestly-experienced theory presenters and PASSING team leaders. One Senior Trainer has a foot in retirement and the other has announced that she will cease teaching SRV in mid 2023. Additionally, other key members of the network are nearing retirement too. ASRVA is working, in quite deliberate ways, to address this situation, and needs your assistance.

B. CHALLENGES IN CURRENT CONTEXT AND OUR ASPIRATIONS

We find ourselves in this situation for numerous reasons. We outline those we think are critical below; no doubt, you will have some ideas too.

a) Professor Wolfensberger's attempts to not have SRV theory bastardised and polluted to the point of dilution has led to poor dispersal of the written theory along with the very thing Wolf wished to dodge – the misinterpretation and often misuse of SRV.

b) Australia got off to a strong start in the promotion of SRV with the Commonwealth Government adopting SRV as a key underscoring theory for the re-imagining of service delivery (under the Commonwealth Disability Services Act of 1986). The Commonwealth, from the mid '80s (or earlier) sent many of its Disability Services staff to SRV theory and to PASSING, not just at the project officer level but through to senior officers as well. Similarly, the Commonwealth financially supported SRV events from the community and state disability services sectors such that many, many people became familiar with the theory. Unfortunately, the political decision to move disability funding/responsibility to the States, taking effect in 1992, lead to a wholesale abandonment of SRV training, with residual state based efforts diminishing over time. Fortunately at this point, local, voluntary SRV groups and a few funded organisations like CRU

in Queensland and Belonging Matters in Victoria, kept some training going. But without the funders' promotion, participation dropped off. The level of participation continued to drop until about the mid 1990s and plateaued thereon.

c)   The teaching of SRV can only officially be taught by Senior Trainers and indeed it is only by attaining that status that people can get access to the full teaching materials. Taking on such a role, while attracting honour and esteem, requires lots of travel and a modest income source, even after meeting the demanding qualifying requirements. This has led to only three working STs in Australia out of five who qualified over the past three decades.

d)   The accreditation, planning, monitoring, developmental, and other non-teaching supports needed to ensure SRV theory and practicum events can occur sits solely with the Australian SRV Association and four voluntary, unfunded community groups in Australia (Foundations Forum in NSW, TEC in SA, TEC-Tas in Tasmania, and Values in Action in Queensland). A small number of SRV-based service organisations will occasionally hire a ST to run a 2-day SRV theory event.

e)   There are only two funded organisations which host accredited SRV teaching in Australia: Belonging Matters in Melbourne, and Community Resource Unit in Queensland.

f)   Apart from local groups, whose focus is primarily on hosting workshops, there are no SRV networks of practitioners across Australia. This is an issue because it means that SRV application conversations are only occurring within the relatively few organisations in Australia whose leadership have a commitment to SRV use.

C.   ASRVA'S PLAN

ASRVA (and its earlier names, ANZSG and ASG) has been consciously aware of this situation for some time. It has, since July 2016, been considering what to do and has undertaken a raft of activities to prepare for the time when we have no Senior Trainers.

ASRVA acknowledges the context in which its work is taking place. It is working towards a plausible, realistic and needed future. But in doing so, ASRVA recognises the three contributors/tensions depicted in the following diagram: the wisdom of the past, the push of the present, and the pull of the future. The **wisdom of the past** represents the influence of the past, the honouring we give it while recognising the need to pursue our future. The **push of the present** is seen in our looming losses of Senior Trainers and other SRV leaders. The **pull of the future** is our desire to move to a sustainable, energetic, and inclusive community of SRV-enthusiasts.
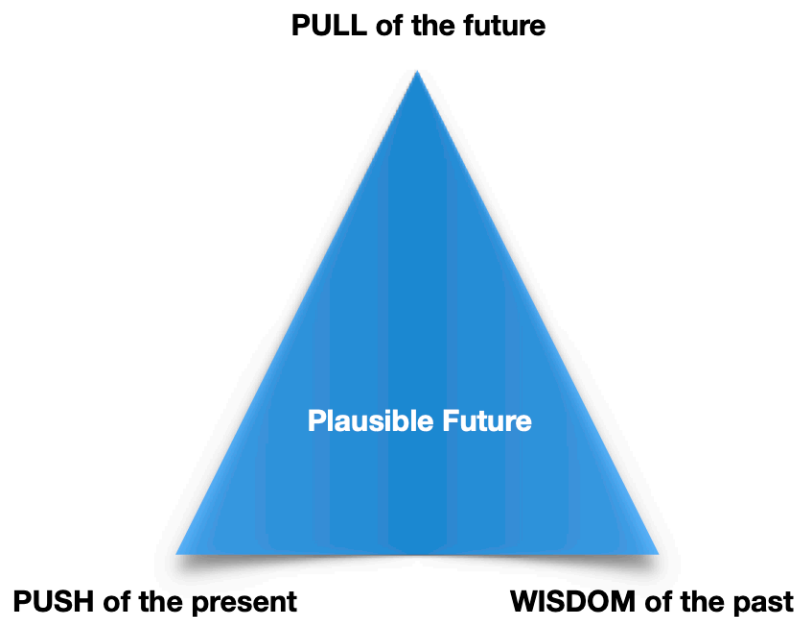

Fig. 1. The futures triangle

Between 2016 and now, five key initiatives have been completed, started, or planned. A brief outline of those initiatives follows. Note, they are not in a date order but rather starting with structural matters and followed by content matters.

a)   **Community of Practice**

ASRVA has sought to determine an appropriate way of operating given its role and purpose. Neither a top-down or a purely member driven approach to its design seems to fit. The group has settled on adopting a Community of Practice mode of operation. This is useful, at the highest level, to:

- have a way whereby a core group can drive the activities of the organisation
- re-energise and re-engage people, thus leading to increased morale and confidence in the future
- create a network, that is, connections of individuals committed to the continuation of SRV and its application
- develop a strong focus on application while maintaining teaching knowledge and skills
- enable people within the community of practice to increase their knowledge, skills, confidence, and motivation to develop their own practice
- make a contribution to the wider SRV sector in Australia and indeed, in other countries, by sharing knowledge and expertise.

b) **Legal Entity**

ASRVA has decided that it needs to form itself as a legal entity for several reasons including to:

- better be able to enact the initiatives it has planned over the coming period
- have a national legal identity rather than a state-based legal identity
- not have to rely on other organisations to manage its money
- give potential members confidence in the organisation.

Once ASRVA is a legal entity various non-programmatic requirements will emerge such as completion of annual financial statements, meeting Board and General Meeting requirements, and ensuring all members meet membership requirements. ASRVA will ensure that non-programmatic elements do not take away from the potency of the rich programmatic intentions of ASRVA.

c) **Research into Application**

A large part of ASRVA's work over the past 4 years, and an essential plank in working towards application and leadership development, is the research into the application of SRV. The first publication arising from the research is entitled *'SRV really expands my radar': Lessons From People Experienced in Applying SRV'*.

This practical-based research, hearing from 21 experienced practitioners of their journey in learning about and using SRV, has been enormously helpful. It has thrown light on people's journeys and thus on what could be done better. ASRVA used this to develop the content of the postponed March 2020 'SRV Gathering' and will use it to inform the development of its application and leadership program (see next section). Furthermore, ASRVA intends conducting further research as the need becomes apparent.

d) Our Journey since 2016

A revised group, comprised of some previous members along with several new members, met in 2016 with a focus on strengthening SRV application and leadership. The group decided to apply its efforts for a time on the critical question heading this section: *'How can efforts be strengthened to support SRV implementation/application and leadership development at a national & local level?'.*

This focus arose historically. After a review of the group (then named ANZSG) in 2015, Judith Ellis, Rhiannon Brodie, Katie Lewis, Margaret Boyes, Yvonne Donnan, Greg Mackay, John Armstrong, and Jane Sherwin met to form recommendations for the group thereon.

The group used model coherency to inform the process. It began by identifying what problem it was that people thought that a national body concerned about SRV could influence. The two key problems identified were: low use/application of SRV and low leadership (in SRV, services, systems, personal).

This journey has led to several initiatives: the Research; The Gathering; and, the critical one, the proposed Leadership Course.

e) Masterclass Course: Leadership for Cultural Change through SRV.

It is recognised that Australia is highly unlikely to develop new Senior Trainers. The challenges are many, including finding i) people interested in the role (given its dubious financial rewards, high level of travel, etc), ii) people who have a level of pre-preparedness such that that journey would not take a decade-plus, iii) people who are young enough such that the effort of acquiring ST status will be sufficiently enduring, iv) sufficient theory and PASSING practice opportunities.

The ASRVA proposal for a Masterclass Course is a response to the current context and its attendant challenges.

It is expected that the Masterclass Course as proposed will achieve dispersed leadership in SRV teaching and application. It will also immediately engage people to undertake leadership activity rather than waiting for a decade plus for a Senior Trainer to emerge. ASRVA will also however consider whether or not, and if so, how we might support/sponsor people into the Senior Trainer role for the longer term.

The Proposal is outlined over the following four pages.

Masterclass Course:
Leadership for Cultural Change through SRV.

An initiative by ASRVA

Introduction

'Cultural change' refers to change within us as individuals, within groups we belong to, communities and organisations. The use of SRV is a very powerful way to implement values that appreciate the wounding experiences and vulnerabilities of people with a devalued social status and the desire for the good things in life.

This initiative seeks to ensure that the learning and use of SRV is vibrant across Australia and that the potency of the theory is not compromised. In other words, this initiative is important for the development and strengthening of the Australian SRV community of practice.

It is anticipated that participants in the initiative will be strengthened in a range of roles and in a range of contexts such that they influence others, such as in the use of SRV, in a teaching context, in influencing the practices of human services and in mobilising others to use SRV.

The course is comprised of three streams: SRV, Leadership, Grassroots change and development. Total face-to-face days = 7; total online days = 15.5.

There are two electives streams: teaching SRV (total 16 days) and the application of SRV (total 9 days).

Participants in the initiative

The following qualities are sought in the participants:

i.   Restless and unwilling to continue the status quo arrangements in the lives of people with a devalued status

ii.   High motivation to sustain SRV in Australia

iii. Prepared to influence others

iv.   A good understanding of SRV at a theoretical and practical level, with an enthusiasm to learn more

v.   Willingness to be thoughtful and think critically, and also to giving and receiving constructive feedback

vi.   Young

vii. Could be people have experienced devaluation themselves, family members, workers and citizens

viii. Connected to others (or willing to create connections) who are interested in SRV.

Outcomes (objectives) of the initiative

Knowledge objectives

Participants will:

i.   Become more alert and nuanced to societal dynamics that alienate and wound devalued people

ii.   Deepen understanding of SRV

iii. Explore dilemmas and challenges within SRV

iv.   Become familiar with other bodies of knowledge/tools that support the use of SRV

    v.   Appreciate the importance of leadership styles and skills in responding to evaluation and in influencing groups

    vi.   Explore features of grassroots change and development

    vii.   Develop an understanding of reflective practice

Experiential objectives

Participants will:

    i.   Feel like they are part of a broader set of efforts to which they have high commitment

    ii.   Participate in face-to-face and online learning

    iii.   Complete projects/assignments that strengthen their learning

    iv.   Experience collaboration, commitment to other participants and a wider network

    v.   Develop a greater awareness of themselves, including their personality styles, communication styles, gifts and their triggers, within their roles of influence

    vi.   Practice the application of SRV

    vii.   Practice talking about, teaching and facilitating the learning of SRV

    viii.   Be exposed to a wider SRV network and feel inspired

    ix.   Develop habits of thinking and habits of action (talking, doing)

    x.   Explore theory, principles and good examples of grassroots change and development

    xi.   Practice using tools for grassroots change and development in a classroom environment

    xii.   Practice working with others to learn and use SRV more in a real context

    xiii.   Demonstrate reflective practice.

Attitudinal objectives

    i.   Consider what roles are a good match for themselves and which will lead to the sustainability of SRV and strengthening of the SRV community of practice

    ii.   Be a reflective learner, a critical thinker and be open to learning including about the criticisms of SRV

    iii.   Show humility in one's reflective practice

Electives and their objectives

    i.   SRV teaching:

        a.   Explore ideas about how people learn in a classroom and in situ

        b.   Understand principles of good teaching and facilitation

        c.   Practice teaching SRV theory at a competent level

        d.   Explore challenging situations

    ii.   SRV Application:

        a.   Practice the application of SRV in both design exercises and analysis exercises, in formal and informal contexts

Content areas

Core topics

SRV

SRV10

Model coherency as a framework for design and analysis

Passing

Dilemmas and tensions in using SRV

Bodies of knowledge that support the use of SRV

Leadership: issues requiring leadership and insights into self

Understanding leadership and different type of leadership

Understand one's own, and others', behavioural and attitudinal preferences (personality) especially when working with groups and influencing others

Interpersonal relationships, influence, communication/dialogue, empowerment, self-awareness and reflection

Giving and receiving critique

Human services: history and inherent foibles, and why leadership is required

Leadership challenges in working in a range of contexts including a range of people with a devalued status: people with disabilities, people who are ageing, people with mental health issues, homelessness, refugees, people who are incarcerated, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders etc

Survival over time and in hostile environments.

Grassroots change and development

Features of positive grassroots change and development, and principles in action

Leading and influencing groups

Tools for shifting mindsets and exploring issues such as Planning basics eg 4P Cycle; Planning, Preparation (participant, technical), Implementation and Evaluation; cutting the issue, change methodology, Johari window, SUGE

Elective streams

Teaching stream

Theory of and practice in teaching: assumptions about how people learn; using good (session) design principles

Principles of good facilitation, including 'the human to human touch' online

Practice at teaching/facilitating

Practice teaching all TABL modules, which includes understanding the teaching notes and developing one zone examples/stories

Responding to challenging situations, such as tricky participants, asking good questions, responding to questions, framing a teaching point, discerning good examples

Using AV and online formats in the 2020s

Application stream

Design of responses using SRV, in particular model coherency

Tools that help SRV in action, such as roles based planning, O'Brien's work, PATH

Analysing scenarios using SRV eg to identify the CVA

Practice at 'weighing up' issues eg choice versus other needs

Deep engagement with 'vulnerabilities' and their implications

Discerning superficial versus deep use of SRV.

What the course might look like, from perspective of Participants

Please note however, that with changes brought about by COVID-19 the exact mix of face-to-face and online might change. We anticipate that each intake's participant group will have a say in determining the mix.

CORE STREAMS	Experiences	Days and face to face or on-line	Total days for participants
SRV	Including a half day online introduction, 2 day Model coherency workshop, SRV 10 Online from the US, a three day passing, action learning online days. Expectation of a project and assignments. Note that there is no topic about teaching in the Stream	8 days face-to-face and 6.5 days online	14.5
Leadership	Topics as per content description on page 2	1 day face-to-face and 2 days online	3
Grassroots change and development	Combination of three days on theory and examples and three days practising using tools, with an expectation of a project	2 days face-to-face and 3 days online	5
Other ideas	Sharing the learning with others in the CoP??		
	Having some sessions open to non-participants? To make best use of guest speakers etc		
	Development of personal starter tool kit: concepts, schemas, tools, credos, favourite articles, cautions, basics, who am I?		
Elective Streams			
Teaching	Learning about teaching and facilitation; Practising teaching. Project?	4 days face-to-face and 12 days online	16 days with the course *plus teaching at SRV events*
Application	A passing at a more complex site that includes a model coherency discussion, individual design exercise, analysing scenarios, using SRV tools. Project?	4 days face-to-face (Including passing) and 5 days online	9 days

f) The Gatherings

One of ASRVA's strategies to help keep SRV alive is that of The Gatherings. The Gatherings will always focus on using, learning, and teaching SRV, and, importantly, on the importance of relationships and networks between and among those involved.

- ASRVA decided to offer an Australian-wide Gathering every two years. The first was planned for March 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19. ASRVA now plans to hold the first Gathering in March 2022 (depending on the progress of the virus) and hopefully every two years thereafter.

- Australia has never had an *Australian* SRV conference (though it did host an SRV International Conference in 2011 that was very well attended).

- The International Conference in 2011 and others have had no or little application focus (though this seems to be changing).

- SRV practitioners have no substantial ways of coming together and networking.

- ASRVA, committed to working on the sustainability and even growth of SRV in Australia, needs a way to engage/ re-engage with SRV enthusiasts.

- ASRVA acknowledges that there have been no, or very little, effort over time to support people, once they have done a theory and PASSING, to use SRV effectively.

- ASRVA, in this first instance, aims to get the individual and collective effort of enthusiasts focused on Application.

- ASRVA recognises the re-energising that comes from large national events, particularly the Training Institute's 7- day event held in Roseworthy in 1992 and the 11-day event held in Brisbane in 1997.

g) Maintenance of other responsibilities including Teaching and Accreditation

ASRVA will continue to meet its obligations (including those above) in relation to:
- Safeguarding SRV
- Developing Leadership
- Pursuing Theory Evolution
- Improving Teaching Methods
- Application of SRV
- Fostering Networks
- Sustaining ASRVA
- Accreditation of SRV Teachers

h) **Network Development, Connection, Mentoring, and Relationships**

One critical reason for choosing the Community of Practice way of operating is to ensure ASRVA deliberately pursues networking, the connecting of people, mentoring, and developing relationships across the movement.

Despite the SRV interest groups across Australia being quite small, for various reasons, there has been low focus or energy expended on the above areas. ASRVA will pursue moving away from hierarchical ways of communicating about SRV, its learning and its application, to a multiple/cross-pathways approach to communication and connection.

D. ROLES

ASRVA will form as a Company Limited by Guarantee (thus enabling it to operate throughout Australia).
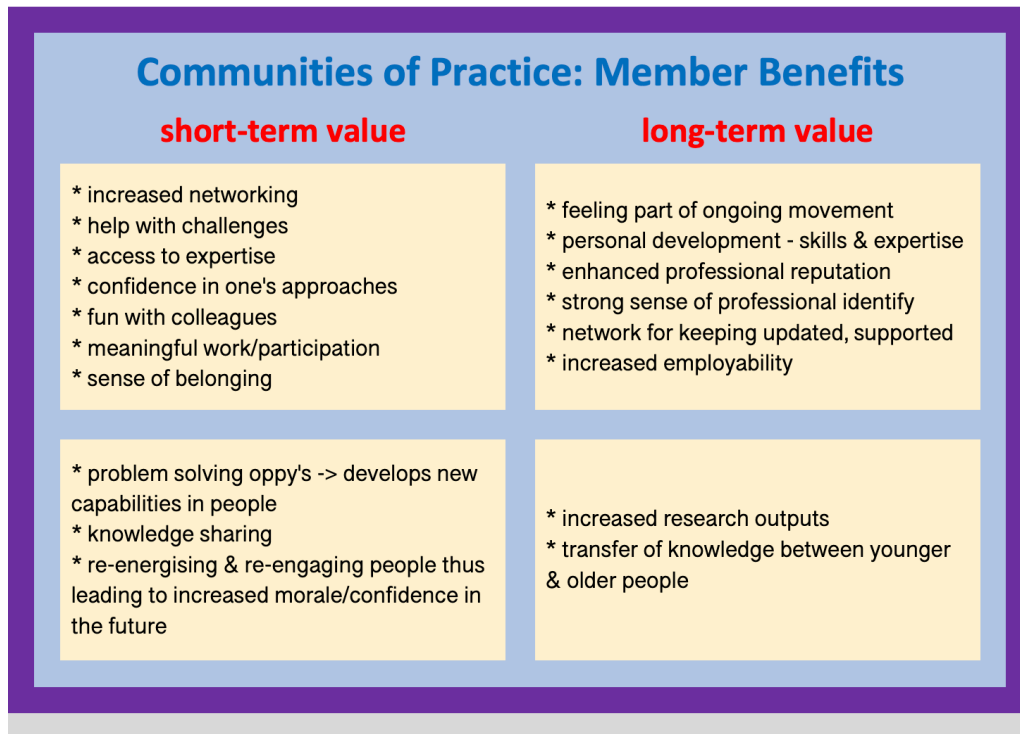
In the language of the registering body, ASIC, ASRVA will be a Company Limited by Guarantee and will be governed by a group of Directors. It will also have members.

In equating this to the organisation in the language of a Community of Practice, the types of engagement through various roles and relationships will likely look like this:

- **Core Group** (the Directors, who will be the current ASRVA members) – this group will hold responsibility for governance, engaging with members, designing/planning efforts to a) keep SRV alive and b) assist members in their SRV learning and application journey.
- **Active** – those with a specified role in ASRVA whether programmatic or non-programmatic, for example, Local/State SRV Group committee members, presenters, team leaders, hosts of study groups, interest group members, bookkeeper, and others.
- **Occasional** – assists with a specific task at a point in time then withdraws until engaging on another matter, for example, a person in a local group who organises ASRVA-Local Group Meetings.
- **Potential Colleagues** – has done SRV/PASSING and probably uses it but is not actively/regularly engaged with ASRVA.
- **Transactional** – organisations whose meeting room we use, professional conference rooms, PASSING sites.

ASRVA is in the early stages of identifying potential members and undertaking a joint discernment process with them as to their possible role/s. ASRVA has prepared a document listing roles/tasks; it is not exhaustive nor will it necessarily remain static.

- **Individual Membership** – the individual members will form the solid base of ASRVA. It is individuals for whom ASRVA is focused on assisting in their SRV use. ASRVA has a separate paper outlining membership and its benefits. However, the following diagram gives a taste of the sorts of benefits that membership is likely to bring. Please note too that ASRVA and any one State SRV Group might elect to offer joint membership to individuals so that they are only paying once nor would they need to choose allegiance.

Communities of Practice: Member Benefits

short-term value

* increased networking
* help with challenges
* access to expertise
* confidence in one's approaches
* fun with colleagues
* meaningful work/participation
* sense of belonging

* problem solving oppy's -> develops new capabilities in people
* knowledge sharing
* re-energising & re-engaging people thus leading to increased morale/confidence in the future

long-term value

* feeling part of ongoing movement
* personal development - skills & expertise
* enhanced professional reputation
* strong sense of professional identify
* network for keeping updated, supported
* increased employability

* increased research outputs
* transfer of knowledge between younger & older people

ASRVA also wishes to recognise other membership categories (formal membership will only be available to individuals).

- **State/Local SRV Groups** – ASRVA is cognisant of the limited relationships between the Australian group and the State/Local SRV Groups over time. Furthermore, ASRVA believes that the revitalisation of SRV (indeed, its survival) will rely on substantial connections across the board and in particular, between ASRVA and the State/Local SRV Groups.

  - ASRVA's formal governance structure will consist of up to nine Directors.

  - I In the spirit of partnership with local groups, we hope to co-design a process whereby we meet regularly, albeit on line, with the Presidents/ Chairs of each of the four State SRV Groups. For example, reserve a

> session online in our 6-monthly face-to-face meetings plus meet online in between our face-to-face meetings with us all on line.

> ▪ So that ASRVA can properly pursue its purpose, ASRVA will ask the State/Local Group to nominate the President/Chair to be the attendee and, as much as possible ensure that the same person participates each time.

- **Institutional Supporters** – this refers to:

  Organisations:
  - o whose programmatic content, is solely or significantly on SRV
  - o which are positively engaged or committed to, among other forms, SRV leadership development
  - o who are able and willing to practically support ASRVA's agenda, for example, through:
  - o financial assistance
  - o releasing staff on full pay or similar to undertake SRV Leadership development such as participating in the Course, attending The Gatherings, presenting at SRV theory events, Team Leading at PASSING, engaging in behind the scenes practical, that is, non-programmatic assistance.

- **Allies** – this refers to:

  Organisations**:**
  - o whose programmatic content is solely or significantly on SRV
  - o which are positively engaged or committed to, among other forms, SRV leadership development

  Individuals:
  - o who, while highly engaged in the SRV movement, elect to not become members of ASRVA – for example, a person who resides in New Zealand or another country, who would not meet membership requirements, but who is committed to contributing to Australian SRV-leadership, and whose involvement would be valued.

The following diagram refers to the many levels of engagement that individuals and groups might have in ASRVA. See the early section of 'D. ROLES' above.

ASRVA illustrated in Community of Practice circles style