

1. Background and Purpose

AC Forum Communities of Practice are dedicated spaces where staff of member organisations working in the same area of association management and/or with a similar sphere of interest can exchange ideas, share best practices, and collaborate with fellow professionals.

This interest is pursued through joint activities, discussion, information sharing, and relationship building, so that members form a community and use the resources and information in their work.

Each Community of Practice has several functions within the community it serves:

- Best Practice: members develop and share best practices, guidelines, and strategies
- Knowledge Management: members organise, manage, and develop a body of knowledge for their own use
- Innovation: members create and develop new ideas, knowledge, and practices
- Helping: members help each other with everyday work needs

Communities of Practice can connect people who may not have interacted before or interacted infrequently, enable dialogue between members, create a channel in which members can share experiences and gain new insights, stimulate learning, facilitate knowledge- and resource-sharing, encourage collaboration, create new knowledge and resources.

An essential element of a Community of Practice is ongoing interaction, both online and in-person, which strengthens the communities by allowing members to engage in discussions and encouraging them to actively participate.

Each Community of Practice is facilitated by at least one member of the group.

2. Participating in a Community of Practice

Members:

Members of a Community of Practice must have an interest in the topic and are expected to actively contribute to the group with their experience and knowledge.

All staff from AC Forum member organisations may join one or more Communities of Practice. Anyone interested in becoming a member of a Community of Practice should contact secretariat@acforum.net.

Facilitators:

The role of facilitators in Communities of Practice involves consulting, guiding, and connecting members, collecting, organising and sharing knowledge developed through the community, and motivating the community to be active if it goes quiet. Facilitators should encourage all members of the community to engage in the group's discussions and activities.

Each Community of Practice should have one or more facilitator(s) and the responsibilities can be divided amongst those who are acting as facilitators. Facilitators should be selected by each Community of Practice, with the approval of the Board. Any changes in facilitators must be notified to the Board. Facilitators are the main point of contact for the Board and others.

3. Process and Scope

Communities of Practice are established according to the AC Forum core topics. The Communities of Practice and the facilitators of each are listed on the AC Forum website. If a group would like to set up an additional Community of Practice, they should submit the request to the Board via secretariat@acforum.net, explaining the rationale and the need for another Community of Practice.

AC Forum provides an online forum for each Community of Practice for discussions, collaboration, and resource sharing.

AC Forum sets up both regular and ad hoc online campfire meetings, as determined by each Community of Practice.

Since Communities of Practice comprise professionals with specific experience and knowledge of the field and insight into the current topics and issues for those working in the field, it would be beneficial to AC Forum members that they contribute to educational events. Communities of Practice are encouraged to organise in-person workshops and to propose and develop sessions for the Annual Meeting. Communities of Practice may also be asked for expert input into related third-party events where AC Forum has been invited to contribute.

Material produced by Communities of Practice may be added to the Knowledge Hub, the repository of educational material on the website exclusively for AC Forum members, subject to approval by the Board.

Communities of Practice may provide a paragraph on their activities during the year to report to the General Assembly.

4. Funding

Requests for funding for the activities of a Community of Practice are handled on a case-by-case basis.

A request for funding must be submitted via secretariat@acforum.net and will be reviewed by the Board. Requests should be submitted by the October of the year preceding the proposed activity, to be included in that year's budget.

All costs for an activity must be approved by the Board before any work can start on planning the activity.

Any additional costs not forming part of the approved budget must be submitted, with an explanation of why they are required to be added to the budget, for separate approval by the Board.

It may be permitted to source funding/support from a third party for an activity, but only with advance approval of the Board. The Community of Practice must indicate the intention to look for, or the possibility to obtain, such funding/support before any work can start on planning the activity. Full details must be provided on the funding/supporting party, the amount of funding/value of support and the purpose for which it is proposed to be used.

5. Compliance with Guidelines and Policies

The activities of a Community of Practice must comply with all AC Forum guidelines and policies.