acforum
associations & conference forum

Communities of Practice Guidelines

1. Background and Purpose

AC Forum Communities of Practice (COP) 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 COP 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

COPs 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 COP 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 COP is facilitated by at least one member of the group.

2. Participating in a Community of Practice

Members of a COP 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 COPs. Anyone interested in becoming a member of a COP should contact secretariat@acforum.net.

3. Role of Community of Practice Chairs

Each COP is facilitated by at least one Chair with expertise and passion for the topic. The Chairs of the COPs are listed on the AC Forum website.

The responsibilities can be divided amongst those who are acting as Chairs.

Chairs are the main point of contact for the Board and others. Any changes in Chair(s) must be notified to the Board.

The role of a Chair involves:

- Consulting, guiding, and connecting members
- Initiating discussions

- Facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practice
- Collecting, organising and sharing knowledge developed through the community. Material produced by a COP 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.
- Encouraging all members of the COP to engage in the group's discussions and activities and motivating the community to be active if it goes quiet
- Leading on the organisation of community meetings online and in-person – campfires and workshops
- Working the members of the COP to propose and develop sessions for the Annual Meeting
- If the COP is asked for expert input into related third-party events where AC Forum has been invited to contribute, leading the group on providing the specialist knowledge
- Coordinating a brief report on their activities during the year for the General Assembly
- Ensuring that the activities of the COP comply with all AC Forum guidelines and policies

Chairs are appointed for a period of up to two years. At the discretion of the Board, an individual may be appointed for one additional two-year term.

4. Process and Scope

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

AC Forum provides an online forum for each COP for discussions, collaboration, and resource sharing.

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

Since COPs 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. COPs are encouraged to organise in-person workshops and to propose and develop sessions for the Annual Meeting. COPs may also be asked for expert input into related third-party events where AC Forum has been invited to contribute.

Material produced by COPs 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.

COPs may provide a paragraph on their activities during the year to report to the General Assembly.

4. Secretariat Support

The COPs and the Chairs of the COPs are understood to be self-managed and should expect minimal support from the Secretariat for day-to-day discussions.

AC Forum provides an online forum for each COP for discussions, collaboration, and resource sharing.

Both regular and ad hoc online campfire meetings, as determined by each COP, will be arranged by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will assist with the administration of workshops and events, provided that they have prior approval of the Board in accordance with the guidelines for AC Forum workshops.

5. Funding

Requests for funding for the activities of a COP 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 COP 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.

6. Compliance with Guidelines and Policies

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

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