



# Communities of Practice (CoP) User Guide, Colorado State University

## Overview:

This [guide](#) is to help facilitators and members of faculty-led Communities of Practice at CSU make the most of their community experience.

## Purpose of a CoP:

A community of practice (CoP) is a group whose members “share a passion for something they know how to do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better” ([Wenger, 2006](#)). Depending on the interests of members, they may host presentations from various CSU departments, share ideas and problem-solve together, host guest speakers, collaborate on projects, or hold social/networking events. A CoP allows people to share knowledge, expertise, scholarship, ideas, and suggestions, both face-to-face and electronically. The size, scope and duration are dependent upon the goals of the CoP.

## Getting Started/ Set-Up

1. **Determine CoP goal(s) and first duties**
  - a. Consider investigating “hot” topics in higher education or issues currently being dealt with in departments or colleges: student or instructor concerns, teaching and learning needs, or changes in technology that impact the classroom. CoP topics at CSU have included alternative grading practices, artificial intelligence, and the integration of adaptive courseware in the classroom.
  - b. Create an annotated bibliography. The facilitation team should provide one or two readings to start and then invite community members to add to the bibliography as time passes. A spreadsheet or tool like [Zotero](#) can facilitate crowd-sourcing the bibliography.
  - c. Recruit participants. You may want to hold an info session before the first meeting to encourage participation. If it feels useful, send 2 sentences about your CoP by email to Stan Kruse to be featured for several weeks on the TILT homepage. Please allow one week turnaround time to get your information on the website. Your notice should provide an email address for the CoP facilitator(s) with a deadline for interested people to reach out for more information by xx date. Promote an introductory meeting for others to learn more and get involved. CoP facilitators are responsible for promoting their CoP through word of mouth and networking. CoP size can vary from small to large but be cognizant that very large groups mean more logistical challenges. (TILT has found 20-30 people to be the maximum to be able to manage the logistics.)
  - d. Co-create the CoP mission, vision, and goals during the first meeting.



- e. Consider identifying and tracking outcomes and then sharing the CoP experience and its findings at CSU community events such as the January Professional Development Institute or at other CSU hosted forums.
2. **Identify co-facilitators or facilitation team**
    - a. It is important that in addition to the primary facilitator, there is **at least** one person who can assist with meeting planning and logistics including monitoring remote members using Zoom, Teams, etc. (Note: Polling members and sending meeting invitations takes a good amount of time!)
  3. **Address resources and logistics**
    - a. Schedule meetings: Tools like [When2meet](#), [Microsoft FindTime](#), google survey, etc., can help identify an optimum time for most participants to attend.
    - b. Plan meetings: [Meeting agenda template](#)
    - c. Choose a central and accessible meeting location.
      - *Hybrid meetings*: This option allows for more participants but *needs to have a dedicated chat manager* – this is a lot of work but worth it. Allow enough time to set up and test technology (Teams/Zoom room and Owl with Tripod).
    - d. Organize materials: Use Teams/SharePoint to organize and house CoP materials and correspondence so that all facilitators can access them.
    - e. Plan for collaboration: Meeting room white boards, Google Jam Boards, Google docs, Teams/SharePoint docs etc., provide a vehicle to facilitate brainstorming and discussion.
    - f. Refreshments: Food brings people together. Decide whether your budget can cover snacks or meals, or CoP members can volunteer to bring food to share.
    - g. Resources: Identify books, webinars, workshops, campus experts, etc., that offer high-quality content to support the goals of the CoP. Invite community members to help crowd source resources.

## Meeting Length, Frequency, and Duration

1. Length: Align the meeting length with the day's class length (M/W/F 60-minutes or T/TH 75-minutes) and the agenda.
2. Frequency: Meeting frequency will depend upon the purpose of the CoP as well as the proposed duration of the CoP. Longer or ongoing CoPs may function well meeting monthly while those of a shorter duration may find meeting twice monthly necessary. Smaller "topic group" meetings can be added between the whole group meetings.
3. Duration: Short-term (one semester, one year) or long-term (indefinitely).

*\*TILT-led CoP tip*: the facilitator team meets once or twice a month to plan meetings, set agendas, and other logistics.



## Typical Meeting Cycle

### Information Session

1. This can be marketed on the TILT website or presented at PDI or Fall Ramp-up
2. Share information about the CoP topic: why it's important, level of interest on campus, etc.
3. Share some research/statistics/literature about the topic

### Meeting #1: Kick-Off (suggested length 90-minutes)

1. [Share the meeting agenda in advance of the meeting. Meeting agenda template](#)
2. Introductions and icebreaker
3. Co-create a Mission/Vision for your CoP
4. Co-create a Community Agreement
5. Decide on a calendar for the CoP: duration, frequency, length, location of meetings (in person, online or hybrid)
6. Share initial reading list

### Following Meetings (60 – 90 minutes)

1. [Share the meeting agenda in advance of the meeting. Meeting agenda template](#)
2. Find your groove.

### Wrap-up Meeting (60 – 90 minutes)

1. Celebrate
2. Reflect on CoP experience
3. Complete a reflection form for the [TEI program](#) (optional)

## TILT Support of CoPs

TILT currently runs several CoPs. We encourage faculty to form and run their own CoP based on their interests. Upon request, TILT will consult with CoP facilitators during the planning stages.

## Contact Information

The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT), Jennifer Todd, [jennifer.todd@colostate.edu](mailto:jennifer.todd@colostate.edu)

## Resources

Adams, S., Tesene, M., Gay, K., Brokos, M., Swindell, A., McGuire, A., & Rettler-Pagel, T. (2023, Mar 7). [Communities of Practice in Higher Education A Playbook for Centering Equity, Digital Learning, and Continuous Improvement](#) Every Learner Everywhere.

Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC). (2016). *Creating Communities of Practices*. Community of Practice. <https://www.communityofpractice.ca/>



Hoke, K., MacFarland, K., Tucker, H., Buchan, T., Todd, J., Kruse, S. (2021, April 27) Guide to Building a Faculty Learning Community. [Guide to Building a Faculty Learning Community](#) Every Learner Everywhere.

The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT). (2023). *Alternative Grading Practices Community of Practice (CoP)*. <https://tilt.colostate.edu/prodev/community-of-practice/>