Communities of Practice (CoP) & Communities of Interest (Col)

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What are Communities of Practice (CoP) & Communities of Interest (Col)?

Communities of Practice and Interest provide valuable networks for staff that span faculties, institutes, service divisions and UniServices. Communities play a role in helping to build relationships that facilitate:

- the identification and recommendation of opportunities for continuous improvement,
- collaborative communication,
- learning and development,
- innovation and good practice

More about Communities of Practice (CoP)

Communities of Practice (CoP) or a Community of Interest (CoI)?

In addition to the information contained in the paper attached above, essentially:

- Permission needs to be obtained from UEC to form a new Community of Practice (CoP),
- CoP’s are also required to contribute to strategic objectives and to report back to UEC annually,
- A Community of Interest (Col) can operate along many of the same principles as a CoP but not have to comply with the points above,
- Col’s will tend to have a more operational focus than CoP’s
- Cols will tend to be affiliated with a CoP.
Communities of Practice (CoP) & Communities of Interest (CoI)

CoIs will tend to be affiliated with CoPs.

Steve McLean talks about CoPs

PowerPoint presentation to assist with CoP & CoI establishment

Connect with a Community

Steve McLean – Communities of Practice

https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/Community of Practice %26 Interest.aspx
The convenor contact details spreadsheet contains:

- Convenor names and roles
- Community members
- Meeting dates. Meeting dates can also be found on the CoP Outlook Calendar. Communities can keep this calendar updated by inviting cop@auckland.ac.nz to their meetings.

What information/topics are suitable for CoPs?

Contact the Convenor directly to discuss an agenda item. Note the below Terms of Engagement which recommend early engagement and collaboration rather than a one-way information download. Communities afford opportunity to involve experts who are close to the work in identifying way to improve good practice.

Kather than receive a download of information or a predetermined decision, communities exist to identify and recommend opportunities for improvement, innovation and good practice.

Engagement guidelines

- Aim to facilitate two-way conversation rather than providing a one-way information download.
- To gather a lot of feedback in a short time consider using participative meeting techniques (see CoP SharePoint site for examples) e.g.,
  - World Café: 1) Break CoP members out into small groups 2) each group provides feedback on a different topic/question 3) at set times (e.g., 5-10min) one person stays at each table and others move to another table topic.
  - Ask open ended questions to engage your audience:
    - What’s happening now? How would you like things to be different? What options/alternatives are there? How will we know it’s working? What are the next best steps? What other factors are relevant or who else is relevant? What effect does this have on service partners/customers/teams?
- Engage with the CoP convenor early on to allow time to assess your request.
- Consider providing information in advance including:
  - A brief overview of your project/programme
  - What kind of feedback are you looking for?
  - How much discussion time you need?
  - Are you seeking a CoP representative for a steering committee/reference

Link directly to a CoP

Committee Work  Comms and Marketing  IT Community of Practice
Facilities and Services  oneFinance  Staff Services
Student Services

Resources for Convenors

https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/CommunityofPractice%26Interest.aspx
Communities of Practice (CoP) & Communities of Interest (CoI)

Connecting with Strategic Programmes and Projects

Click here to understand more about role of Communities in strategic programmes also read the 'Terms of Engagement with CoPs' shown above.

Information about Processes and Procedures can be found here

- including information about Change Control, Faculty Professional Staff job descriptions, Functional Model and Faculty Professional Staff Organisational Charts

Facilitation Support

For in-house support please contact cop@auckland.ac.nz or pod@auckland.ac.nz. Alternatively recommended external facilitators connected with the teams in Organisational Performance and POD who support the CoPs are: Glenys Gwynne 0274157519 glenys.gwynne@emovare.co.nz (Noting that facilitation fees may apply)

Convenors’ Network

A convenors’ network exists to support the sharing of experiences and knowledge amongst convenors about what’s working and not working. This network links convenors to resources and support to enable them to carry out their role. The network is facilitated by members of Organisational Performance and Improvement (OPI) Contact cop@auckland.ac.nz for more information.

Funding Good Ideas

- Request funding from the service, process or function owner
- Communities can also apply for the VC Strategic Development Fund
- Including improvement recommendations in the Good Ideas register can make it easier to get the support you need to progress an improvement.

Convenors’ Tool Kit

Click here to access the Community/Convenors Toolkit: An introductory tool kit for convenors and members is available to support communities to become self-sustaining and to add value to members as well as the wider University

Meeting Techniques:


Recommended Readings:

CoP or Col?
Col or CoP?
The Systems Thinker
Cultivating Communities
The Organisational Frontier
Virtual & Physical Meeting Spaces for CoPs

In the same way that physical meetings around large tables such as the Council Room can sometimes hinder collaborative communication, so too can Virtual Meetings.

Large groups can make it difficult for quieter members, or more than one person at a time to contribute. To maximise collaboration.

In virtual meetings, consider using Microsoft Teams or ZOOM breakout spaces so that your CoP can work on many topics at the same time.

In Physical meetings consider using rooms with smaller movable tables (or no tables) where people can sit in groups. Consider moving the meeting around campus or taking it off-site to visit other organisations who are doing something you could learn from.

Just select ‘Movable Tables and Chairs’ when searching for your meeting room.

Example collaborative spaces (good idea to book well in advance for some of these spaces):

- OPI Think Space. L12, 49 Symonds St (Contact: madeleine.wood@auckland.ac.nz cc: cop@auckland.ac.nz)
- Kate Edger Information Commons: 315:101: Contact: Catherine Stephens
- Fisher Building: Orchre Room 804:204 (Contact: Lynette Herrero-Torressee (See pictures below))
- Fisher Building Penthouse Suite. Contact Lynette Herrero-Torres (see pictures below)
- ClockTower Seminar Room: 105.012
- Pat Hanan Room: Arts 2, Building 207 (Room 501)
- POD Training Rooms; 620:501 or 620:401
- New Market Campus. Contact Pedro Silva
- 423-340 (CAI/Conference Centre)
- Goldies Cellar Bar

- Federation Room Old Government House: Contact Tim Biggs
- Unleash Space. Contact Darsel Keane
- Science 302-130 and/or 302-140 during semester break (very large room, small moveable tables, lots of white boards, power points hanging from ceiling etc)
- Lunch at the Art Gallery
- An off-site visit: Learn from other organisations. Does anyone in your CoP have contacts in other organisations that you could visit?

**What's Hot? News**

![CoP Exec Sponsors, Sponsors and Convenors Session](https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/Community%20of%20Practice%26%20Interest.aspx)

Most 2020/21 convenors have been involved in developing the following proposed items for discussion in the upcoming CoP Exec Sponsor, Sponsor and Convenors session:

- The purpose of CoPs
- Discuss the effectiveness of CoPs. Draw on CoP Health Check data. What’s working, what to improve?
- Increasing collaboration between CoPs/functions
- The role of Sponsors in supporting value for and from CoPs

In the lead-up to this date, Sponsors and Convenors are encouraged to liaise with each other to develop potential agenda items for this session.

CoP Convenors will be invited once they are confirmed for 2022.

A Community Health Check Survey was sent to CoP and Col convenors in late 2021 for distribution to members.

Track the aggregate results here: https://ql.tc/Ayp3vh

Results for each CoP or Col are made available to convenors, together with an Action Planning Kit and facilitator support, as more members complete the survey.

Aggregate results for all CoPs will be used at a CoP Sponsors workshop scheduled for April 2022.

3rd CoP Convenor Session - Oct 2021

More detailed notes are available to current CoP Convenors via the link below. The discussion centred on:

- Rethinking the shape of Student and Academic Services CoP and Col model - SSFR1&2
- Rethinking the shape of Digital Services CoP and Col model
- Both the above had a focus on strengthening CoP to CoP partnerships
- An example of the Good Ideas process working well was shared - Staff Services - GSM Improvement Working Group

**Identified topics for next session:**
- Making the role of Convenor more attractive (and easier)
- Engaging with influence in strategic programs & projects and Function Reviews
- Sponsor session 2022

Notes from the 3rd CoP Convenors Session 2021
2nd Community of Interest (Col) Convenor Session - Aug 2021 - L4 Lockdown

Notes from Col Convenors session 2 - 25 Aug 2021

Detailed notes are available to current Col Convenors via the link above. In brief, Convenors discussed how to engage Col members in virtual meetings. This session used breakout rooms in Teams as well as other techniques including JAM collaboration boards.

We also looked at the University Good Ideas Process and how to connect with CoPs, Sponsors and decision owners to help get improvements progressed.

1st ever Community of Interest (Col) Convenor Session - June 2021

It was great to feel the energy in the room at the first ever Col Convenors session. Cols operate in a similar way to CoPs. The Col purpose is similar to CoPs in that developing good practice, capability, communication, improvement, and innovation is core.

Col’s are usually associated with a CoP, however because of their membership Col’s take on a slightly different context. Maybe they could be described, “for lack of a better phase ‘cooler” said Maria Thomson, who helps support CoPs. “What’s meant is Cols often have less ‘top down’ influence on their agenda so can really discuss things that add value for them”, adding “maybe Cols have something CoP’s can learn from”. That said, it’s always about striking a balance between value for the community and for the University.

The Col session

- Detailed notes from first Col Convenors Sessions
- PPTs from 1st Col Convenors session
- The session demonstrated the World Café meeting methodology (see picture below). This supports high levels of collaboration and the ability to cover multiple topics in a short time. Find a quick guide here or email cop@auckland.ac.nz
- Overall. Cols were keen to understand and be a part of further developing channels for improvement
Communities of Practice (CoP) & Communities of Interest (CoI)

Overall, CoIs were keen to understand and be a part of further developing channels for improvement and innovation. Some ideas can ‘just get done’ because they’re local they don’t impact outside that area. At the other extreme, some ideas become part of strategic projects >$500K. **What about the ideas in-between? These are often great ideas, recommended by the CoI and/or CoP but require a decision, funding, resource, or change or project management support. How do CoPs and CoIs navigate those ideas through to resolution?**

That’s the proposed topic of the next CoI session...do you have some ideas?

![Image](https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/Community of Practice & Interest.aspx)

**Convenors Session #2 - May 2021**

CoP Convenors met to discuss 1) Engaging with Strategic Projects - Increasing the value of CoPs; 2) CoP or CoI? 3) Additional support

Main outcomes were:

- **Improving engagement between CoPs and Strategic Projects:** USPO/BTO will send to Convenors over the coming weeks a table containing a list of all projects. CoPs can decide if they’d like to be consulted or informed. The table will include space for the name of a CoP member as key contact for relevant projects.
- USPO also pointed to the intranet page containing the [2021 strategic portfolio](https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/Community of Practice & Interest.aspx) of work
- Some Convenors recommended a regular agenda item for those project key contacts to collect and share feedback with the rest of the CoP for relevant projects. Feedback can be collected between meetings using CoP’s Team/chat.
- **Workload** – when project involvement seems like a second job. Members were encouraged to negotiate to request funding and/or backfill from projects
- **CoP or Col?** Attendees workshopped differences. Clearer guidelines will be developed to support decisions about whether a community is a CoP or a Col
- All CoPs are encourage to have a staff facing intranet or SharePoint page for your CoP. e.g., [Demo CoP Example SharePoint Page](https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/Community of Practice & Interest.aspx). Recommended that you nominate someone else in your CoP to lead this. Contact [cop@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:cop@auckland.ac.nz) for technical help and/or help to develop content e.g., you ToR.
- **Facilitation or other support is available** via [cop@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:cop@auckland.ac.nz) to assist with CoP refreshes, planning sessions, ideas to address Health Check Results etc

Nā māua noa, nā

**Notes from Convenors Networking Session - May 2021.docx**

**Manage Good Ideas Allocated to your CoP**

Good Ideas from staff around the University are allocated to a Representative within each CoP. See the list of representatives under: How do I Connect with a Community?

https://uoa.sharepoint.com/sites/ServiceExcellence/SitePages/Community of Practice %26 Interest.aspx
More information about the Good Ideas process can be found here.

Anyone can log a new Good Idea from here.

**Quick links to Good Ideas Registrar**

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**Demo CoP Example SharePoint Page**

**Additional readings & resources for communities:**

Cultivating Communities of Practice

Thinking together: what makes
University scoops award second year running

For the 2nd year the University has won the AHEIA Best Practice Award for Excellence in People and Culture. The Association of Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) 2018 award recognises the University of Auckland’s success in the cross University implementation of Communities of Practice (CoPs) and the value they are adding for members and for the University.

Congratulations to all of the convenors past and present, CoP sponsors, stakeholders and over 250 CoP members for their achievements in obtaining this award.