

Association of Science-Technology Centers Communities of Practice

What are Communities of Practice?

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Three essential components of CoPs are:

- a group identity formed by a shared domain of interest and therefore a shared competence that separates members from nonmembers
- use of interaction as the primary mechanism for learning
- identification of a particular shared practice (the portfolio of experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems) that the CoP seeks to improve.¹

ASTC's professional development strategy is designed on a Communities of Practice approach, with the goal of positioning ASTC as a convener and supporter of member-driven CoPs. This strategy will support sustained and impactful professional development that has field-wide impact.

Convening an ASTC CoP

Eligibility

- Primary contact(s) must be an ASTC member or employed by an ASTC member institution.
- Must have a specific issue or audience identified (e.g., Explainers and Facilitators, CEOs, Developing Content about Energy in Science Centers, Volunteer Management, etc.).
- Should have a preliminary engagement plan developed (e.g., conference calls, in-person meeting, webinar, chat forum, etc.), including draft timeline for implementation.
- Must identify a legacy product for sharing CoP output with field (e.g., white paper, presentation archives, conference sessions, *ASTC Dimensions* article, *astc.org* blog post, etc.).

Benefits

- Dedicated ASTC staff liaison support.
- Listing of CoP on ASTC website, online calendar of events, and social media feeds.
- Marketing of CoP activity in appropriate ASTC member communications.
- Directed marketing to appropriate ASTC member segments and partner organizations.
- Implementation support for teleconferences, webinars, and in-person meetings at the ASTC Annual Conference.
- Ability to survey ASTC membership once annually (approval required).
- Free access to full functionality of *ASTC Connect*, the association's online learning platform.
- Board- level impact: CoP activities will shape ASTC's leadership and field development strategy.

¹ Adapted from E. Wenger, *Communities of Practice: a brief introduction*, 2006. <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/index.htm>



Association of Science-Technology Centers

Community of Practice Proposal Form

Please complete this form and return to profdev@astc.org. You may submit your answers in a separate document.

An ASTC staff member will contact you within one week to confirm receipt. At that point, we may ask you to provide additional or clarifying information.

If you have any questions, please contact profdev@astc.org with the subject line “CoP Help.”

Please provide the following information for the point of contact for your proposed CoP (this person must be currently employed at an ASTC member institution).

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name of proposed Community of Practice:

Please list any individuals with whom you plan to collaborate in forming the “core team” of the CoP. Please include their title and institution.

CoPs are primarily organized around continuous opportunities for interaction and collaboration. Please choose which activities you would like to use to engage the CoP.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convene regular conference calls | <input type="checkbox"/> Organize one or more webinars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plan one or more Roundtable for Advancing the Profession (RAPs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Write a white-paper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated online space on the ASTC Community site for discussions/resource-sharing | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate around grant-planning |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey ASTC membership |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe) |

Please describe who you hope to engage in this CoP (e.g., practitioners, floor staff, administrators, etc.).

Statement of Understanding

As the convener of a Community of Practice, I agree to the following:

1. To contact and update the CoP ASTC staff liaison on a bi-monthly basis regarding the activities of the CoP;
2. Create a legacy product for sharing CoP output with the field;
3. All CoPs are open to all ASTC members;
4. ASTC reserves the right to advertise and promote all CoP activities as ASTC deems appropriate.

- I agree to the ASTC CoP statement of understanding.