

ASTC Guidelines for Communities of Practice

Definition

ASTC defines a Community of Practice (CoP) as a group of people who share a common interest, concern, aspect of their identity, or problem. Through ongoing connection and collaboration, members exchange knowledge, share experiences, and strengthen their practice. Members have opportunities to engage year-round across multiple platforms, both synchronously and asynchronously.

Access

CoPs are available to all ASTC members as a member benefit, including all part- and full-time staff, volunteers, and board members at member organizations. Both Science Center and Museum (SCM) and Allied members can participate in CoPs.

CoP must be initiated and Captained by ASTC members. However, exceptions can be made for non-members to join a CoP on a case-by-case basis (e.g., a partner group on a project or a subject matter expert). To request non-member access to CoPs please email membership@astc.org for assistance.

Rules and Etiquette

Our community is built on respectful, thoughtful, and professional dialogue. By participating, you agree to keep conversations constructive, relevant, and free from offensive, illegal, or promotional content. Please respect others' perspectives, follow copyright and intellectual property guidelines, and use the space in ways that benefit the entire community.

ASTC may review or remove content and limit access if these guidelines aren't followed. For further details, please take a moment to read the full Code of Conduct and Terms of Use.

Creating a CoP

CoPs must be initiated by ASTC members who agree to serve as a CoP Captain.

Each CoP must have 1-2 Captains who facilitate the group, lead multiple CoP engagements throughout the year, and share plans, updates, and engagement records with ASTC.

Submit this form to [propose a new CoP](#). ASTC will assess submissions and collaborate with the CoP Captain(s) to set up approved CoPs. Before submitting a proposal, please review the list of active CoPs.

Engagement Expectations

For a CoP to be considered active, the community must commit to the following:

- Designate 1-2 Captains who communicate CoP plans and updates with ASTC
- Offer multiple engagement opportunities throughout the year for CoP members to take part in the community, which may include virtual meet-ups, in-person engagements at the Annual Conference, webinars, professional development, discussion forums, resource sharing, contributing content, or other ways to get involved.

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Lifespan of a CoP

CoPs are not expected to last indefinitely. Some naturally conclude when projects or timely issues are complete. On an annual basis, ASTC will assess each CoP's activity and engagement with the Captain(s). CoPs may evolve, pause, or adjust their focus over time to best meet the needs of their community.

Resources and Support

ASTC provides guidance, tools, and platforms to help Captains lead their CoPs effectively, foster engagement, and achieve their goals.

ASTC Guidance

- Check-ins with ASTC Staff - Quarterly or as needed check-ins provide CoP Captains with advice, problem-solving support, and strategic guidance.
- Resource Recommendations- ASTC offers guidance and reference materials to help Captains engage members, advance CoP goals, and contribute to their own professional development.

Platforms for Communications and Engagement

- CoP Discussion Forum and Resource Library - Captains can use these platforms to engage members, share resources, and facilitate discussions.
- ASTC Zoom Account - Captains can host virtual meet-ups, webinars, and workshops using the ASTC Zoom account, providing a reliable and user-friendly platform for connecting.

Promotional Channels

ASTC supports Captains in raising awareness of CoP activities.

- Informer (ASTC's biweekly newsletter) - Brief announcements of events and updates to the ASTC community
- Dimensions (ASTC's online publication) - Collaborate with ASTC to create in-depth content highlighting CoP projects or achievements.
- Social Media - Promotion of new CoPs or public webinars
- ASTC website - Listing virtual and in-person engagements
- Targeted emails - in some cases, ASTC may send invites or promote CoPs to specific member groups.
- Membership Benefit Communications - Annual outreach to ASTC Members highlighting benefits, including participation in CoPs, to raise awareness and encourage participation.