

## Communities of Practice – Overview and Guidelines

### Background

The AHECS Executive Board is keen to support members to come together to share, discuss and support each other in relation to practice areas of mutual interest.

**Communities of Practice are defined as a group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and want to learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.**

We see Communities of Practice (CoP) as an ideal mechanism to facilitate member engagement around shared challenges, problems, innovations and ideas.

CoPs will be completely autonomous and flexible in terms of topics worked on, time commitment, the process of engagement and their dissolution.

### Creating a Community of Practice

To set up a Community of Practice, you simply need an **idea, objective or purpose** for a CoP. This process will take no longer than one calendar month (dependant on the schedule of Executive Board Meetings at the time of receipt of CoP proposal).

#### **Steps:**

- Complete CoP proposal form and email to [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie)
- Proposal will go to the Executive Board for review and approval.
- Once approved, administrator will notify CoP facilitator(s) and request they meet with an Executive Board Director (currently Michael McDonnell [michael.mcdonnell@ucd.ie](mailto:michael.mcdonnell@ucd.ie)) who is responsible for new CoPs.
- To grow further interest in the CoP, an expression of interest can be circulated to the AHECS membership with a summary of the objectives of the CoP and contact details of facilitator(s).

### Facilitator(s)

Communities of Practice work best with a facilitator(s) to manage overall co-ordination. This person(s) may be the one who had the original idea or indeed any other member of the AHECS community.

#### **Role of Facilitator:**

- Agree overall goals of the CoP.
- Agree a schedule of meetings with colleagues.
- Agree a collaborative workspace.
- Coordinate communication with participants throughout the lifespan of the CoP, including email notices for scheduled online meetings.
- Agree a process to collect and share data/insights/information within the CoP.

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- If appropriate, agree a process where findings/resources or any outputs can be shared with the wider AHECS membership.

### Guiding Principles for CoP

- Administration light – members can agree the level of notes/minutes recorded.
- CoP is open to all AHECS membership.
- CoP is flexible i.e. members can drop in and out of a CoP based on needs.
- Facilitator(s) acts as moderator for the group, keeping the group on task and acts as a liaison with AHECS Executive.
- More than one facilitator for a CoP is recommended.
- CoPs are required to update all members with twice yearly newsletter contributions and updates for the AHECS website. Updates to be sent to the AHECS Administrator [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie).
- Please note that funding is available for some CoP related activities. Contact [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie) to request a funding proposal form.