TESOL Communities of Practice Procedure Manual

This procedure manual addresses the establishment, renewal, and discontinuation of the two types of communities of practice (COPs) in TESOL International Association: professional learning networks (PLNs) and interest sections (ISs).

1. **Application to Form a PLN**

To establish a PLN, interested members should contact COP@tesol.org with the following information:

- **A name for the group** that accurately represents the group's purpose.
- **A statement of purpose**, with an explanation of how the proposed PLN advances TESOL's mission and strategic direction.
- The name and email address of one TESOL member who will serve as the **contact person for the PLN.** This person will be responsible for keeping the group's information up to date.
- The name and email address of one TESOL member who will serve as **the discussion facilitator and moderator**. This person can be the same as the contact person.

TESOL Staff will inform applicants whether the PLN has been approved within 30 days of receiving the application.

TESOL will provide approved PLNs:

- **An online discussion platform** with instructions on its use.
- **A TESOL staff contact person** who will help establish the group's presence on the TESOL platform.
- **The opportunity to submit a convention session proposal** to the Convention Professional Council for adjudication.

1.1 Renewal of PLN
To continue as a PLN, the contact person must notify COP@tesol.org annually in October of the group's desire to continue**.**

A PLN may choose not to continue at any time. If a PLN does not indicate each October its interest in renewing for the next year, the PLN will dissolve. The TESOL Board of Directors may also dissolve any PLN that (1) does not adhere to TESOL's mission, core values, and nondiscrimination policy; (2) does not show any activity for more than 12 months.

1.3 Change from a PLN to an IS

To become an IS, the PLN must follow the application procedure to form an IS outlined below.

2. Application to Form an IS

2.1 Proposing a New IS
Groups that wish to propose a new IS should follow the IS proposal approval process.

2.1.1 Preproposal Review
A group of 20 or more TESOL members may propose a new IS. To start the process, send a letter of interest to COP@tesol.org. This letter should include
- **A rationale** describing the professional need for a new IS; i.e., the proposed IS does not significantly overlap with existing TESOL components (e.g., other ISs, Professional Councils) and relates to relevant and current issues in the field.
- **A list of at least 20 TESOL members** confirming their interest in establishing the new IS.

After an initial review by the Executive Committee, TESOL staff will forward the rationale to the IS leadership online community and the TESOL Board of Directors requesting feedback to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will decide whether to allow the proposal to move forward.

2.1.2 Formal Proposal
Following initial approval to apply from the Executive Committee, a formal application must be submitted. The formal application will be reviewed and voted on at the October board meeting and should be submitted no later than the August prior to the meeting. The application should include the following information:
- **A name of the group** that accurately represents the groups' purpose
- **A statement of purpose,** with an explanation of
    - how the proposed IS relates to TESOL's mission and strategic direction
    - How it enhances and extends a unique area of expertise within TESOL International Association not already addressed through other entities (e.g., professional councils)
    - how it reflects a key area in the TESOL profession
- **Proposed activities** to undertake during the first year that will promote community development, member engagement, and contribution to TESOL's professional knowledge and expertise
- **Proposed strategies** for membership recruitment and retention, leadership succession, and leadership development
- **A description of leadership** roles and responsibilities, length of service, and order of rotation; and
- **The name and email addresses of the initial IS leadership** including
    - chair
    - incoming chair
    - At least three additional positions (e.g., newsletter editor, community manager, member-at-large)

New ISs will be informed of the application status by 1 November.

TESOL will provide ISs with

- **An online discussion platform** with instructions on its use
- **A TESOL staff partner** to help organize virtual seminars, newsletters, and other activities, as needed
- **A board liaison** to facilitate communication with the Board of Directors and the association membership
- **The opportunity to lead one nonadjudicated academic session** in the TESOL convention program
- **The opportunity to lead one nonadjudicated collaborative session** with one or more TESOL entities (e.g., IS, PLN, or professional council) according to procedures determined by the Conferences Professional Council
- **An open business meeting** at convention
- **A networking session at convention** to share success stories and plan collaborations
- **A planning session at convention** with board liaisons to discuss IS strategic direction
- **Templates** for initial self-assessment review and plan, annual continuous improvement plan, three-year self-assessment and review, portfolios, innovative projects, and budget requests
- **Additional staff and/or other resources** may be provided upon request. Requests should be made by May of each year to be included in the subsequent year's budget.

2.1.3. Initial Self-Assessment and Plan

After one year, the new IS will submit a self-assessment review and plan documenting its achievements and challenges with respect to its initial plan (see 2.1.2) and formulating goals to guide its activities and strategies for the next three years. This self-assessment and plan will be shared and reviewed with the staff partner and board liaison. If the IS leadership shows the viability and growing vitality of the new IS, the IS enters a regular three-year planning and review cycle.

2.2 Renewal of ISs

2.2.1 Continuous Improvement Plan (Annual)

ISs will be responsible for submitting an annual continuous improvement plan to the IS staff partner in May of the first and second years of the three-year cycle presenting

- **The contact information** for the current leadership team
- **A self-assessment of progress** towards achieving current strategic goals
- **A self-assessment of barriers** to success and proposed alternative strategies to better reach goals the next year
- **Any modifications to strategic goals**
- **Any requests for resources** supporting achievement of their strategic goals during the next fiscal year

TESOL's Executive Committee and the IS staff partner will prioritize requests for additional resources with the following criteria in mind:

- Does the request facilitate on-going, yearlong engagement of IS members?
- Does the request reflect an activity that is innovative and not captured through other TESOL-directed activities?
- Does the request clearly support the ISs and TESOL's strategic direction?

2.2.2 Three-Year Self-Assessment and Review

As part of its renewal application, an IS is expected to present multiple and varied sources of evidence of success in reaching its goals as a COP. The self-assessment and review should address the following two domains.

Domain 1. Community Development and Member Engagement

An IS is vibrant when its members feel connected and share information and expertise related to issues that matter to them. Central reflection questions to consider for this domain are

- How have we engaged our members in sharing their expertise, in learning from each other?
- How have we constructed a vibrant professional community?

IS member engagement and community building can take many different forms, but some possible strategies and indicators include

- **Online discussion:** postings and responses
- **Professional development opportunities:** Attendance of and/or number of members accessing webinars or virtual seminars, academic session at convention, Intersections
- **Resource sharing:** blogs, newsletters, webinars, videos
- **Connecting/networking:** social media likes and sharing, online forum participation
- **Soliciting member input on key issues:** surveys, polling, providing feedback
- **(Growth in) number of members**

Domain 2. Contributions to TESOL International Association through IS Organizational Engagement and Expertise

ISs execute a core function in the association. They provide unique leadership development opportunities and expertise on policies, scholarship, and practices in the TESOL field. Central reflection questions to consider for this domain are

- Have we advanced the mission of the association through knowledge creation and/or dissemination?
- Have we engaged and helped develop new professionals and members to become thought leaders in the association?

ISs can show their organizational engagement and expertise in different ways. Possible strategies and indicators include

- **Providing input** to staff or board of directors on specific issues or policies
- **Serving as a resource** for professional councils or other entities in the association
- **Leadership orientation and mentoring:** Leadership certificate completers, minutes from business meeting, participation in IS leaders' workshops
- **Contributing to TESOL's online town hall meetings**

The thee-year self-assessment and review is due in May and should include

- **Continuous improvement plans** from the first two years of the cycle showing ongoing efforts to engage members in a vibrant COP
- **A new IS three-year plan**, including any updates to the group's statement of purpose and leadership succession plan

ISs are strongly encouraged to document their activities and projects throughout the year to facilitate the review process.

2.3 Dissolution of a IS

An IS can be dissolved at any time at the request of its own IS leadership. In addition, an IS can be dissolved by the TESOL Board of Directors under one or more of the following conditions:

1. The IS fails to adhere to TESOL's mission, vision, core values, or nondiscrimination policy
2. The IS does not submit its annual report for more than two years in a row or does not engage in the self-assessment and review process
3. The IS does not fulfill its basic functions of membership engagement, leadership development and succession, and expertise building and sharing as evidenced in annual reports and three-year self-assessment and review reports.

   If an IS is struggling to meet its basic functions for three years in a row, the Executive Committee will ask the board liaison to work with the IS on a one-year improvement plan. The improvement plan will outline specific goals and milestones. If the IS does not meet the goals outlined in the improvement plan, the board will take a formal vote on whether to dissolve the IS.

2.4 TESOL Members Joining ISs

Current TESOL members can join any IS. Identifying a primary IS is no longer necessary.

2.5 Changes to the Procedure Manual

Each year IS leaders may submit suggestions for changes to this procedure manual to the IS staff partner by 31 January. Substantive changes related to COP application requirements or criteria will be considered by the TESOL Board of Directors. Changes related to routine implementation procedures (timelines, submission forms, etc.) will be reviewed and approved by the board liaison, the staff partner, and COP Leaders. It will be the staff partner's responsibility to maintain a current procedure manual in the IS leader library.

Please direct questions about COP policies and procedures to COP@tesol.org.