

TESOL Communities of Practice Policy

Purpose

TESOL Communities of Practice (COPs) are the association's professional learning communities, where TESOL members develop and share their expertise on English language teaching and learning with other COPs, professional councils, the TESOL Board of Directors, and their colleagues. COPs are committed to research-based practice and scholarship.

Functions

COPs have the following functions:

Generating Knowledge

- Assist in cultivating content in areas of expertise
- Serve as area-specific resources

Communicating and Facilitating Dialogue

- Develop leaders within the profession and within the association
- Disseminate relevant information to members
- Engage with members around professional issues relevant to their areas of interest
- Facilitate dialogue and community

Guiding Principles

These principles shape the relationship between the association and all COPs within the association:

Trust

The association strives to cultivate a culture of trust among its COPs, members, Association leaders, and staff. This should be achieved through open and frequent dialogue, information-sharing, and transparency in decision-making.

Inclusivity

In principle and in practice, TESOL values and seeks diverse and inclusive participation within the field of English language teaching. TESOL COPs should promote involvement and broad access to professional opportunities for all. COPs will not allow discrimination of any kind, including, but not limited to, language background, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, appearance, or geographic location in their membership and the activities they undertake.

Strategic Alignment

COP activities align with and seek to further the strategic direction of the association.

Sustainability

COPs engage in sustained, year-round activities that promote dynamic and vibrant communities.

Cultivation of Leadership

COPs contribute significantly to the association's body of knowledge and sense of community as well as strengthening the association's relationships with its members. COPs should provide opportunities for leadership development and advancement within the association and should be recognized for their contributions.

Types of COPs

The association has two types of COPs: professional learning networks (PLNs) and interest sections (ISs).

Professional Learning Networks

PLNs are informal, discussion-based groups that are structured by their members. They typically emerge in response to specific and/or timely issues or actions and therefore form and dissolve easily.

Interest Sections

ISs focus on a specific area of knowledge generation within the field. They provide greater variety and level of sustained activities, such as IS-specific projects and year-round outreach. ISs develop strategies for communication, member engagement, and leadership development. ISs are rooted in and contribute to current practice and research. ISs take time and effort to establish and are assigned both a board liaison and staff partner.

Mission and Structure

Both PLNs and ISs adhere to [TESOL's mission, vision, core values, and nondiscrimination policy](#) and support TESOL's strategic direction, but each type has a different structure and expected set of activities. This difference allows COPs with various goals to engage in activities in a way that makes sense to them and works best for them—i.e., with flexibility that helps not only the COPs but also the association.

Governance

A [procedures manual](#) maintained by the TESOL Board of Directors and the COP staff partner shall be established to promote good governance of COPs. The manual will identify both criteria and process for establishing, renewing, and discontinuing PLNs and ISs. The goal of the procedures should be to promote a sense of purpose, responsive leadership, regular activity, and effective communication with members in COPs.