

Knowledge Translation Toolkit

Creating a Local Community of Practice

A community of practice (CoP) is a place to share knowledge related to practice and research, discuss practice-related questions, and learn new techniques or strategies that others have used successfully.

Use this guide and related resources to assist in developing your own CoP.

Preparation

- Define the purpose of the CoP.
- Determine if the CoP will be a singular meeting, or if the intention is to create an ongoing community.
TIP: Start small if needed. Plan a singular meeting and gauge interest in ongoing meetings.
- Identify a general topic or practice area for the group (e.g. pediatric, neuro, hands, etc.).
TIP: Keeping it broad will attract more practitioners across diverse practice settings.
- Write introductory information to include in emails or other communications about the purpose of the project.
TIP: Send an introductory email to potential participants, and ask if they would like to be added to a list for upcoming events. Invite members from diverse backgrounds to ensure that your representation aligns with your community.
- Identify the contact group
 - Your own social network
 - Your place of work
 - Your state association
 - OT and OTA programs at local colleges and universities; provide prepared information for programs to distribute faculty, fieldwork educators, and students
TIP: In communications with potential attendees, ask them to share the information with colleagues.
- Determine if you will offer contact hours

Plan The Meeting

- Determine the date & time
TIP: Choose a few options for the date, and use those when deciding on a venue.

- Find a speaker
- Consider local university contacts.
- Reach out to speakers you have enjoyed hearing at local conferences.
- For ongoing group planning, keep a list of interested speakers and their availability.
- Apply for CEU credit
 - Contact your state licensure board to determine if there is a cost associated with the CEU application.
 - If your licensure board charges a fee, consider fronting the money and asking attendees for a small amount to pay you back.
- Decide whether your meeting will be virtual or in person
 - If in person, find and book a meeting space.
 - Library (often the best option—access to AV equipment, typically free).
 - Community center (may have small room rental charge).
 - For small groups, consider a coffee shop or other similar establishment.
 - Weekday evenings (Monday–Thursday) will likely work best for the majority of people. Book the space for 30 minutes before and after the actual event for set-up and clean-up, as well as to allow for networking.

TIP: Ensure that the space you reserve is accessible and that materials are usable by all members.
 - If virtual, select a platform
 - Ideally, the platform should be easy to access from multiple institutions.
 - Consider using social media.
- Consider having a way for attendees to speak after/between sessions
 - Social media
 - Email group
 - CommunOT
- Notify potential attendees
 - Send out an email invitation, or consider using social media.
 - Ask people to forward your email or social media post to their colleagues.
 - Include multiple work settings (e.g., if working in a hospital, send to contacts in skilled nursing as well; if working in a school, reach out to local outpatient facilities).
- Consider whether to ask for RSVPs—if no, may not know how many people will come. If yes, people may be discouraged from committing (and makes it seem more formal).
- Consider collecting feedback after the meeting (develop your own form or use the Meeting Feedback form included in this toolkit)

Hold The Meeting

- Collect sign-in information
 - Keep records so you can confirm attendance in case someone gets audited or needs a new copy for their records.
 - Attendance verification can be on paper or electronic (e.g., using an online survey or typing into a chat box).
 - Be sure to get attendees' email addresses so you can add new ones to your distribution list.
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- Distribute CEU certificates
 - Can have blank ones prepared ahead of time if meeting in person or email them out afterward.

Follow Up

- Review feedback and make notes for planning the next group meeting.
- Send a thank you email to attendees and include information about how to communicate with other attendees between sessions.
- Consider if you would like to involve others in planning future meetings; if so, ask for volunteers.
 - Archive materials for future use and in case members need access to records.
 - Review evaluations and practice continuous quality improvement strategies.