



2017-18 Communities of Practice (CoP) Co-Chair Application

Deadline: April 17, 2017

Info Sessions: March 24, 11:30 – 12:30 and April 11, 3:30 – 4:30

Why Communities of Practice?

Those in a community of practice share a common concern or passion and learn how to advance that passion through regular shared interaction. The members of a community of practice share a domain of interest, engage in joint activities, and have an ongoing, sustained interaction over time contributing to their shared practice. Communities of practice can serve varied functions, including solving problems, sharing information, providing experience, utilizing shared assets, coordinating and strategizing, building a case for action, documenting projects, mapping knowledge, gaining confidence, and more. (Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, 2015)

Minnesota Campus Compact (MNCC), in partnership with the University of Minnesota's Office for Public Engagement (OPE), Iowa Campus Compact (IACC), and Wisconsin Campus Compact (WiCC), is facilitating a set of communities of practice (CoPs) in 2017-18 to enhance individuals' capacity to do community engagement work in higher education; to harvest resources, research findings, program models, insights, etc., to share with those beyond each CoP; and to build the field's knowledge about CoPs as a model for professional development.

The 2017-18 Communities of Practice are intended to support collaborative learning and leadership around key issues related to fulfilling the five commitments in [Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Action Statement](#) signed by most MNCC, IACC, and WiCC members:

1. We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond the campus—nearby and around the world.
2. We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.
3. We embrace our responsibilities as place based institutions, contributing to the health and strength of our communities—economically, socially, environmentally, educationally, and politically.
4. We harness the capacity of our institutions—through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice—to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.
5. We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.

What will these CoPs look like?

Our goal is to support both issue-focused CoPs and campus-based CoPs in 2017-18. Although the two types of CoPs will function somewhat differently, all co-chairs and participants will gather in person on October 13, 2017, in a Twin Cities location TBD, to launch their CoPs.

- Issue-focused CoPs will take place largely online and will include participants from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa with 8-12 participants each, led by two co-chairs, formed around a specific issue in higher education community engagement. If applicants do not identify a specific desired co-chair, MNCC and OPE staff will match co-chairs based on shared interests, then promote each CoP topic and recruit participants. These CoPs will meet four times, for 1.5 hours each, via Zoom video conference call. Depending on funding and interest, we will support as many as six issue-focused CoPs.
- Campus-based CoPs will meet in-person on campuses in Minnesota. The focus of these groups may be community engagement, generally, or a specific issue. MNCC and OPE will support as many as five campus-based CoPs. We ask co-chairs to apply together. Those selected will be responsible for recruiting participants and organizing their own CoPs. (Note: Campuses near one another could also choose to host an in-person CoP together.)

Regardless of type, the CoPs will span the 2017-18 academic year. Co-chairs will work together to plan and facilitate each session. Some may decide to have participants do a reading, have pair conversations, prepare a written reflection, bring a resource to share, etc. between sessions. Staff support will be available to all co-chairs throughout the process.

What will the issue-focused CoPs address?

The following possible topics for regional issue-focused CoPs reflect common challenges and priorities we hear in our ongoing work with campuses. You may apply to co-lead one of these or suggest another topic of your choosing. If you are interested in multiple topics, please rank your preferences.

- Learning to build stronger partnerships with communities
- Making engagement accessible for low-income and underrepresented students
- Developing citizen professionals/connecting workforce and civic development goals and programs
- Creating the conditions for deep conversation and listening across differences
- Developing a culture of engagement at the department or unit level
- Tracking and coordinating engagement at the institutional level
- Writing and publishing about community and civic engagement in higher education
- Understanding our own cultures, identities and stories as tools in our work
- Creating a climate of democratic learning and engagement
- Capturing and communicating the results of community engagement
- Advanced community-engaged research methods

Potential co-chairs of a campus-based CoP are asked to propose a topic appropriate to their institutional context and priorities. For some campus-based CoPs, a theme as general as “community engagement” may be appropriate.

Who will participate in the CoPs?

The issue-focused CoPs will be open to faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community partners affiliated with the University of Minnesota and Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin Campus Compact member campuses, who have demonstrated a commitment to and passion about each CoP’s selected issue. MNCC operates on the belief that regardless of formal role, we all have valuable knowledge to share and learning to do. The CoPs are designed to leverage connections and open conversations that might not otherwise occur. People interested in participating will complete a very short application, to be reviewed by the sponsoring organizations’ staff. Note: Campus-based CoPs will only take place in Minnesota, and each CoP’s co-chairs will manage recruitment.

What are the benefits of co-chairing a Community of Practice?

CoP co-chairs will have the unique experience of collaborating with other change-oriented people from an array of roles and institutions across the region in a collaborative and asset-focused environment. They can expect to learn with participants and gain experience facilitating this type of collaborative learning process, including using remote digital engagement tools (for issue-focused CoPs) and harvesting resources and shared knowledge. In addition, co-chairs of the issue-focused CoPs will each receive a \$1,000 stipend. Campus-based CoP co-chairs serving their own campuses are offered staff support but will not receive a stipend.

What is the commitment required?

CoP co-chairs will convene for one in-person gathering of their CoP on October 13, 2017 at a Twin Cities location TBD. This event will be organized by MNCC and OPE staff. Co-chairs will then prepare for and co-facilitate at least four conversations with their CoP over the academic year. Before the in-person gathering, issue-focused CoP co-chairs will need to provide staff with four dates/times for their CoP sessions, and all co-chairs will participate in an orientation provided by MNCC and OPE via video call. OPE and MNCC will coordinate the recruitment of issue-focused CoP participants, provide technical assistance, organize the in-person fall convening, and check in periodically with co-chairs.

Why video calls?

The values of inclusion and openness lead us to use digital strategies for our regional, issue-focused CoPs. While there are both distinct opportunities and challenges that accompany this web-based strategy, our experience with previous projects suggests video calls will allow a wider range of individuals from a broader geography to learn from one another. It also saves time and expense related to travel, lowering barriers to participation. If the video calls prevent accessibility for a participant, staff will work with them to develop appropriate accommodations.

How will co-chairs be selected?

Applications must be submitted online no later than April 17, 2017. MNCC and OPE staff will review applications and select participants using the following criteria:

- demonstrated commitment to leadership on the issue you select
- experience facilitating collaborative group processes
- willingness to commit to co-chairing a CoP for one academic year (September 2017 – May 2018)
- interest in both developing your own leadership and co-creating resources and learning opportunities for others
- creation of co-chair pairs with complementary skills and perspectives
- affiliation with an MNCC or IACC member (see lists at <http://mncampuscompact.org/who-we-are/member-campuses/> or <http://iacampuscompact.org/who-we-are/members/>), for those at higher education institutions

Please note that we encourage those in faculty and/or staff roles and community partners to apply.

How do I apply?

Please submit a cover letter, resume/CV, and three references to Amber Cameron at acameron@umn.edu no later than April 17, 2017. In your letter, please describe:

- the issue(s) you would be interested in facilitating a CoP focused on and why (choose from the provided list or propose another; if you're interested in multiple topics, please rank them);
- whether you can commit to participating in the video call orientation, preparing and co-facilitating at least four video call conversations with a Community of Practice over the 2017-18 academic year, and convening for one in-person gathering on October 13, 2017;
- what skills you bring to the co-chair role; and
- how you would define success for your CoP.

If you're interested in co-chairing with a specific person, please submit separate applications that indicate your desired co-chair. You're not required to apply with a co-chair if you are interested in a regional, issue focused CoP. Our staff is happy to match issue-focused co-chairs based on aligned interests. Please note that we will give preferences to co-chairs affiliated with different campuses.

If you are interested in leading a campus-based CoP in Minnesota, please identify a co-chair on campus and submit one joint application.

Have more questions?

We will offer information sessions on March 24, 2017, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and April 11, 2017, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., via Zoom video conference call. Contact us (see below) for the link to join the call. With any questions, you're welcome to contact Sinda Nichols, Associate Director of Minnesota Campus Compact, at sinda@mncampuscompact.org or 612-436-2080, or Amber Cameron, Associate Director for Public Engagement Initiatives, Office for Public Engagement, University of Minnesota, at acameron@umn.edu or 612-624-1706.