

# COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Construction Owners Association of Alberta pivoted strategically and began work to adopt an issue-based Communities of Practice (COP) model. This shift is intended to make the Association more inclusive and modern, while also prioritizing the advancement and adoption of industry best practices.

## PURPOSE OF COAA COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

COAA defines a community of practice as a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals. A COP is a forum for COAA members to meet and engage in active conversations on a specified area of interest.

The belief is that these active contributions enable networking, sharing in each other's journeys and know-how, and create take-away opportunities for greater member collaboration. They also intentionally organize, manage, and steward a body of knowledge from which community members can draw.

Face-to-face meetings and events, virtual engagement, web-based collaborative, and professional growth environments are critical for the COP to communicate, connect, and conduct community activities.

A community of practice may be formed a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) through formal Board resolution, through ad hoc recognition of a relevant and timely topic that the Association determines holds value to the membership, and through the natural or designed evolution of an existing COAA committee.

A community of practice may spur the creation of a committee or subcommittee, task force, or working group wherein the committee or subcommittee, task force, or working group focuses on a specific and targeted topic with a clearly identified outcome.

## MEMBER/PARTICIPANT FRAMEWORKS

Domain: Community of practice members have a shared domain of interest, competence and commitment that distinguishes them from others. This shared domain creates common ground, inspires members to participate, guides their learning, and gives meaning to their actions.

Community: Members pursue this interest through joint activities, discussions, problem-solving opportunities, information sharing and relationship building. The notion of a community creates the social fabric for enabling collective learning. A strong community fosters interaction and encourages a willingness to share ideas.

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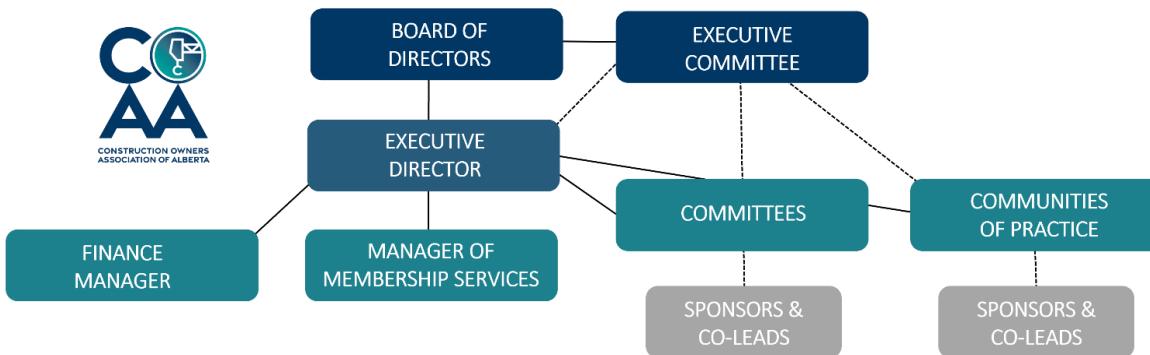
Practice: Community members are actual practitioners in this domain of interest and build a shared repertoire of resources and ideas that they take back to their practice. While the domain provides the general area of interest for the community, the practice is the specific focus around which the community develops, shares, and maintains its core of collective knowledge.

## TACTICAL & STRATEGIC ROLES

Tactically, a COP has a leader (or co-leaders) who are responsible for planning and facilitating a recurring series of COP meetings with a narrower topic chosen for each meeting (in line with the broader area of focus as determined by the Board of Directors and included in the COP charter).

The COAA Board of Directors support the advancement of communities of practice through strategic oversight guidance. The Board is relied upon for distinctive best practices expertise, leadership, and volunteerism to identify and advance COP priorities. Leadership is provided by participation of a Board member, who sponsors the COP and advocates for its purpose and activation. A Board sponsor also has a leadership role, but the Board sponsor is expected to provide strategic support and act as a conduit to and from the Board of Directors.

Additional tactical support may be provided by the COAA administrative arm. The Executive Director and the Manager of Membership Services provide support through planning, coordination, and execution of events, marketing, and communications activities that advance the purpose of the COP and the best practice it is trying to steward. This support comes in the form of communications and marketing expertise, guidance on COP engagement and networking activities, and planning and coordination of in-person and virtual events hosted or sponsored by the COP.



There are typically between four and five active COAA COPs, each assigned an area of interest. The areas of interest or topics of priority are evaluated and chosen by the Board at the annual strategy session and set for the year ahead (examples are Safety, Planning, Technology Enablement, Fundamental Leaders of Industrial Construction, Collaborative Contracting). The areas of interest are deemed current and highly relevant to the member's continuous improvement of heavy industry safety and productivity.

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## COP OPERATING COMMITMENTS

In order to achieve success, COAA's COPs will champion a specific and clear topic or theme relevant to COAA's membership. The domain must be well-developed and approved by the Board of Directors in line with the Association's strategic and operating plan.

Commitments for a successful COP include:

- Advancing a domain theme or topic that energizes a core group
- Recruiting a robust, knowledgeable, and passionate leadership group able to dedicate the necessary time and effort to lead the COP
- Meeting regularly and offering engagement opportunities for members
- Willingness to work closely with the Board sponsor to advance the COP
- Willingness to work closely with COAA Executive Director and Manager of Membership Services to establish platforms and tools that enable seamless and professional communication
- Willingness to utilize COAA's communications, event coordination, and COP marketing resources
- Adhering to a formal and informal reporting structure to the Board of Directors
- Transparency in action and willingness to pivot to best serve the priorities of COAA

## VALUE TO MEMBERS

	<b>For Professionals</b>	<b>For Member Companies</b>
<b>Short Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help with challenges</li> <li>• Access to expertise and leadership</li> <li>• Confidence building</li> <li>• Meaningful work</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Synergies across sectors</li> <li>• Time saving</li> <li>• Employee satisfaction</li> </ul>
<b>Long Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Personal development</li> <li>• Enhanced reputation</li> <li>• Professional identity</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic capability</li> <li>• Industry relevance</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Talent retention</li> <li>• New strategies</li> </ul>