

STRATEGIC NETWORKS/ COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

At CDN, we are dedicated to supporting college staff in their efforts to collaborate, share good practice, and collectively enhance their work across the college and the broader tertiary sector. By fostering strong networks and communities of practice, we can drive continuous improvement and innovation, ensuring that our institutions remain responsive and effective in meeting the ever-changing demands of the educational landscape.

To deliver this, CDN provides administrative and expert support to a range of **Strategic Networks** and **Communities of Practice**.

The following explains the differences between a Strategic Network and a Community of Practice, as well as how CDN will support each.

Strategic Networks

A **Strategic Network** is a group of leaders within the college sector, often at senior leadership level, who collectively and strategically support the future focused thinking and planning of a key area and/or specialism in response to changing needs and contexts within the tertiary sector.

Strategic Networks are:

- A way to critically assess current and future practice and co-develop strategic and collaborative solutions.
- Future-oriented, fostering cross-sector and/or cross-systems changes in practice to respond to the emerging needs of the sector.
- A platform for accessing and collaborating with key stakeholders relevant to their specialism or area of work at a strategic level.

Roles

CDN will...	Strategic Networks will...
Set up and manage Teams Channels or JiscMail for communication and information sharing.	Nominate a Chair/Vice Chair for the Network.
Maintain membership lists and provide new members with necessary access and guidance.	Develop and agree Terms of Reference for the Network where appropriate.
Send calendar invites for online meetings as directed by the Chair/Vice Chair.**	Communicate regularly with CDN to schedule meetings, update member lists and share any staff changes.
Provide input and support at network meetings as needed.	Prepare and share meeting agendas, themes, and information.
Connect members up with stakeholders and other organisations.	Compile and share meeting action logs/minutes as needed.
Help facilitate project activities and sharing of best practice as agreed by CDN and the Chair/Vice Chair.	Lead in developing and delivering collaborative projects to meet network goals.
Support the dissemination of network activity at a national level through marketing, CDN comms and relevant national reports and events.	Respond to JiscMail and MS Teams messages (all members).

**Breakout rooms can be set-up upon request based on CDN staff availability.

Community of Practice (CoP)

Formerly professional networks/ professional learning communities

A **Community of Practice (CoP)** is a group of college staff who work in similar roles across colleges, connecting departments and/or are all developing and delivering within a specific area or topic, and are looking to connect with colleagues across the sector to share and improve practice on the ground. CoPs support the ongoing development, quality and enhancement of college provision and key services. Through the collective efforts of their members, CoPs contribute significantly to the professional growth of individuals and the overall improvement of practice.

CoPs provide:

- Opportunities to improve practice through collaboration and collectively tackle practical challenges across the sector.
- A resource for professional development, guidance, and support.
- A platform for sharing and developing best practice.
- A way to connect with key stakeholders and external partners as needed.

Due to the size and scale of CoPs, each CoP should nominate 2-3 members (CoP Leads) from within the CoP, who will collectively manage the CoP and lead activity.

Roles

CDN will support by...	CoP Leads will...
Set up and manage Teams Channels or JiscMail for communication and information sharing.	Encourage membership to the CoP and support the dissemination of CoP activity within colleges.
Maintain membership lists and provide new members with necessary access and guidance.	Communicate regularly with CDN to schedule meetings and update member lists.
Send calendar invites for online meetings as directed by the nominate CoP members.**	Prepare and share meeting agendas, themes, and information.
Provide input and support at network meetings as needed.	Compile and share meeting action logs/minutes as needed.
Connect members up with stakeholders and other organisations.	Lead in developing and delivering collaborative projects to meet network goals.
Help facilitate project activities and sharing of best practice as agreed by CDN and the CoP.	Respond to JiscMail and MS Teams messages (all network members).
Support the dissemination of network activity at a national level through marketing, CDN comms and relevant national reports and events.	Inform CDN of any staff changes within the network.

**Breakout rooms can be set-up upon request based on CDN staff availability.



Communication with CDN and Key Contacts

All communication with CDN for administrative support and the running of Strategic Networks and CoPs should be made through networks@cdn.ac.uk.

In addition, each Strategic Network and Community of Practice has a main contact from CDN who is on hand to help members with more specific support and advice as outlined above such as providing input into meetings, helping facilitate project activity, connecting stakeholders, and supporting dissemination.

A full list of CDN Strategic Networks and Communities of Practice can be found on our website. Click the link below:



cdn

College Development Network

www.cdn.ac.uk

