

What Are Communities of Practice?

Coined by Drs. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and want to learn how to do it better as they interact regularly [Wenger-Trayner].

A Community of Practice (CoP) has three defining characteristics:

- **Domain:** CoP members share a commitment to a domain and seek a collective understanding of each other's competencies and basic understanding of their shared concern or passion.
- **Community:** CoP members engage in joint activities to learn how to improve their programs, share best practices, and explore collaborative growth. Each member contributes to the growth of others.
- **Practice:** A CoP is a group of practitioners who develop a shared repertoire of resources, such as experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems.



Tailoring CoPs to Academic Health Centers

Elements of a CoP: Implementation and Sustainability

Communities of Practice are not stagnant. The plan for sustainability must include a strategy to:

- Recruit and sustain a diverse team of academic, clinical, professional, policy, and lay audiences.
- Conduct forums regularly to identify, translate, and disseminate evidence-based best practices.
- Identify best strategies and venues for reaching different populations.
- Evaluate effectiveness of strategies in reaching targeted audiences.

Unlocking CoPs: Unique to Institutions

While CoPs share characteristics, CoPs can be tailored to serve the unique needs of the domain and the institution. From the case studies presented here by NCMEDR and CDHW, we found that CoPs are not standardized. In fact, CoPs at academic health centers work best when they are modified to the domain, community, or practice. With this toolkit, we present two case studies from the National Center for Medical Education, Development, and Research and the Center for a Diverse Healthcare Workforce.



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Tools

CDHW Website: www.tinyurl.com/ucdCDHW

NCMEDR Website: www.ncmedr.org

Toolkit: <https://tinyurl.com/ToolkitCOP>

References

Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (n.d.). Introduction to Communities of Practice. Retrieved from <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>.

Brown, K. Y., Juarez, P., & Matthews-Juarez, P. (2018, March 9). Building Primary Care Education Communities of Practice: Engaging Non-Traditional Partners: Transforming Medical Education and Clinical Practices to meet the needs of Vulnerable Populations. [PowerPoint PDF].

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DEVELOPING

Communities of Practice

FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

a how-to guide
featuring case studies from



About Us: UC Davis, Meharry, and HRSA

The Center for a Diverse Healthcare Workforce (CDHW) at the University of California, Davis, and the National Center for Medical Education, Development, and Research (NCMEDR) at Meharry Medical College are part of a collaborative of institutions funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Academic Units for Primary Care Training and Enhancement (AU-PCTE). HRSA created the AU-PCTE program to improve clinical teaching and research in the fields of family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics with the goal of strengthening the primary care workforce. Academic Units like NCMEDR and CDHW are tasked with conducting research to inform primary care training; disseminating findings, best practices, and resources; and developing a Community of Practice (CoP) to promote the widespread enhancement of primary care training. While the concept of developing a CoP is not new, CoPs can evolve in many different ways. Using a variety of platforms and methodologies, institutions can explore the most effective ways to utilize their communities and partnerships to cultivate change.

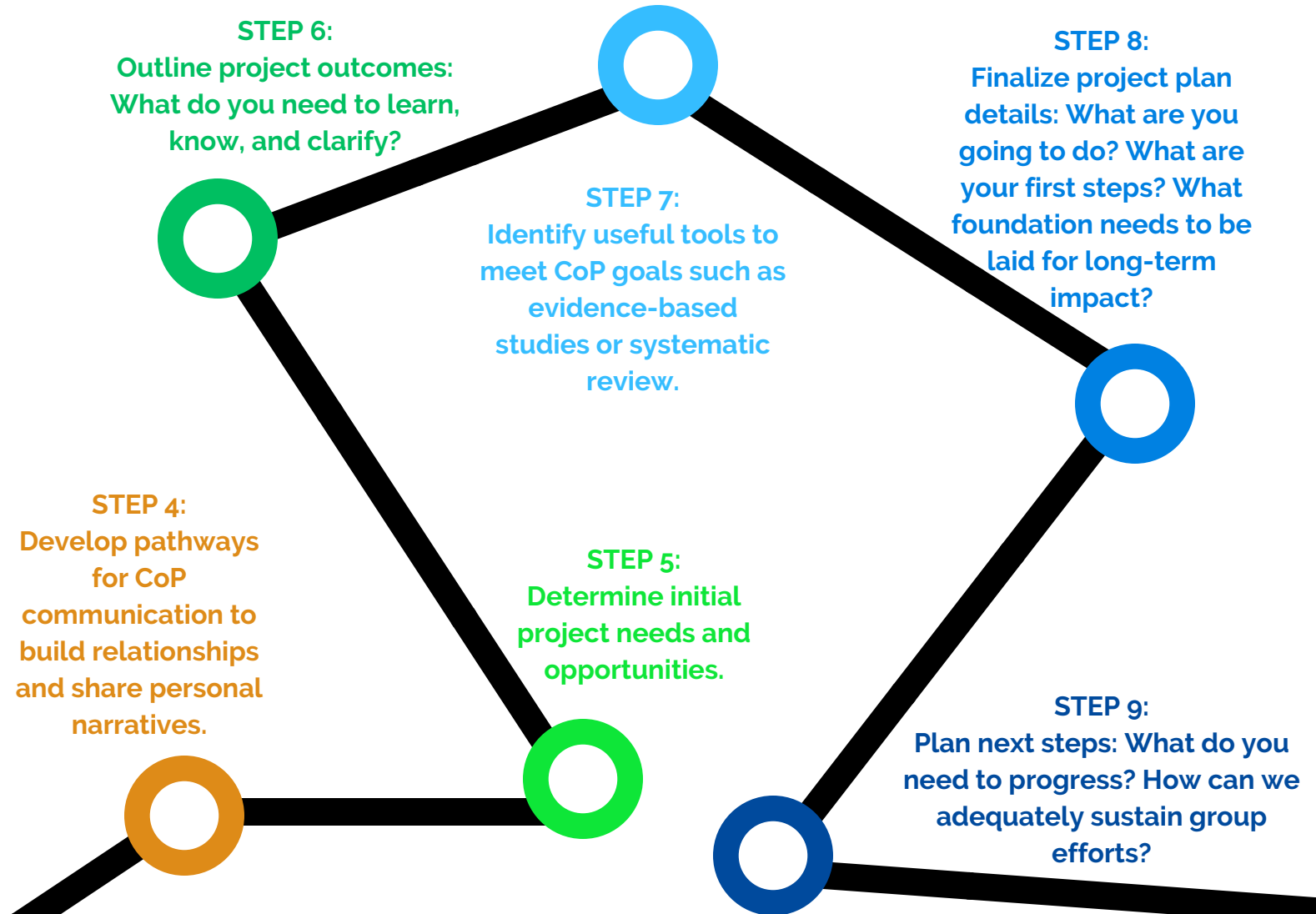
The mission of the Center for a Diverse Healthcare Workforce at UC Davis is to promote best practices and advance diversity in the workforce by:

- Leading research focused on recruiting, training, and retaining a diverse healthcare workforce to advance health equity.
- Sharing research and engaging in meaningful conversations to increase diversity in the healthcare workforce.
- Creating partnerships that collectively result in advancements in educational opportunity, equity, and diversity within the healthcare workforce.



The National Center for Medical Education, Development, and Research at Meharry Medical College is focused on enhancing primary care training, access to health services, and treatment of vulnerable populations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons; homeless persons; and migrant farm workers. The mission of the NCMEDR is to:

- Link with other national partners to highlight systems-level research of evidence-based interventions for vulnerable populations that will inform primary care training.
- Disseminate best practices and resources to primary care providers and trainees to improve clinical outcomes among vulnerable populations.
- Establish Communities of Practice that will promote the widespread enhancement of a high-quality, primary care workforce and produce better health outcomes for LGBT, homeless, and migrant worker populations.



Case Study: Community Health Center Endorsed Applicant Program

In response to the persistent workforce shortages at Community Health Centers and the resulting disproportionate impact on health of low-income communities, the CDHW convened a CoP with the California Primary Care Association, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and a regional association of health centers. This CoP aimed to deepen each participant's understanding of the operations and needs of each member organization and to seek potential solutions to the workforce shortages. The group agreed that recruiting and supporting local students could be a robust pathway to physician recruitment at a health center. Over the course of 10 months, the group explored creating an Endorsed Applicant Program that would support talented pre-medical students who could attend the UC Davis School of Medicine and enter Graduate Medical Education programs at or near the health centers. CoP members can become active participants in the admissions process at UC Davis School of Medicine and participate in developing curricula and clinical experiences in Community Health Centers. This Community Health Center CoP has led to joint grant submissions and looks forward to continuing the work over the next year. Also stemming from this collaboration, the California Future Health Workforce Commission has adapted the scope of this CoP as one of the top 10 priorities for California.

Case Study: Curriculum and Training: Practice Transformation in the Age of Training Millennials at Meharry Medical College

The CoP at the Meharry Medical College's NCMEDR brought together individuals from medical schools, academic institutions, primary care facilities, members of LGBTQ+ groups, homeless persons, migrant farm workers, policy makers, patients, and caregivers. NCMEDR CoP members participated in a series of events to foster communication and community building among our groups. We held seminars, webinars, and an in-person conference for CoP members to share their experiences, stories, and best practices with the goal of enhancing care for our vulnerable populations.

The CoP also collaborated with non-traditional partners using social media. We shared evidence-based studies on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to promote the need for primary care training specific to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons; homeless persons; and migrant farm workers. The CoP is developing a certificate program and clinical rotations to train future and current health professionals in the care of our vulnerable populations.

