



Communities Of Practice First Meeting Plan

The first meeting of each CoP should be an organizing meeting. Although members may not know one another well, they will likely have at least met at a Kenissa Consultation and have all expressed interest in continuing the conversation through this CoP. The following meeting plan reflects an effective way of planning a meeting: it sets out clearly the meeting purpose, the process to be followed, and the desired outcomes. Framing the conversation with those three pieces of information—purpose, process, and desired outcomes—at a high level at the outset will let everyone know how to contribute to making the meeting/conversation a success.

Welcome

Welcome everyone and frame the conversation:

Purpose:

The purpose of this first CoP conversation is to get organized as a CoP so that we can learn with and from one another and build a worthwhile community of practice.

Process:

Connection: Ask each person to introduce her/himself, share (briefly) what organization they are part of and what it does, and one thing they are hoping to gain from being part of this CoP. *Note: have someone take notes of these hopes or ask individuals to type them into the chat box so you can refer to them during the core conversation.*

Text Study: See *T'filat Haderech* text study in Appendix A

Core Conversation: The core conversations focus on CoP mission, procedures, topics, and norms.

- **Mission:** invite the group to revisit the list of hopes they expressed as part of the connection. Ask: if these are our hopes, what are we saying we want this CoP to accomplish? What is our *raison d'être* (reason for being)? Again, have someone capture as many notes as possible from this conversation, then ask someone in the group to take those notes and draft a brief statement of the CoP's purpose/mission. See page 5 of this guide for a sample CoP mission statement.

- Procedures: Procedural issues to discuss include: how often the group will meet; how (and if) the group will interact between CoP sessions, and how/where it will share and store resources; and how the group will make decisions. In the interest of time efficiency, you may want to suggest procedures for reaction from the group rather than holding a blank-slate conversation. For example, you might suggest:
 - Monthly meetings of the CoP (at least for the next four months to see how that frequency works before revisiting the arrangement;
 - Using a particular platform (e.g. closed Facebook group for both between session interaction and sharing resources;
 - Making decisions by consensus using the Fist-to-Five method (see above)—you could have a description of the method ready to share on screen during the session.
- Norms and expectations: to work smoothly and prevent conflicts from arising unnecessarily, the group needs to agree on norms for how the members will operate together. As above, you might suggest some possible norms or “groundrules” as drafts and invite the members to suggest additions, changes, or deletions until you arrive at norms everyone can agree to. You might show the draft onscreen, take notes on people’s comments and, after reaching verbal agreement in principle, ask someone in the group to take the notes a fashion a final version that reflects the will of the group. Norms might focus on:
 - Presence (including both showing up and being focused on the conversation free from distraction);
 - Participating actively,
 - Volunteering to facilitate sessions, share case studies, articles and such, maintaining a balance within the group so that everyone contributes and no one carries an undue burden, recognizing the role of the co-leaders is to coordinate—helping keep the CoP moving in its chosen direction—not to do everything themselves.
- Topics and questions to focus on: Facilitate a conversation in which the group brainstorms a list of topics—within the CoP’s defined area of interest and concern—that they would like future sessions to address. Again, you might draw on the flipchart notes from the breakout session at the March 2017 *Kenissa* Consultation as a starting point and ask for expansion of those topics. Another way to proceed is

simply to ask for volunteers to take responsibility for arranging a future meeting around a topic of interest. You might, for example, find someone willing to bring a case study and someone else willing to facilitate the discussion using a protocol you suggest. Lining up the next two or three sessions in this way will give you a good headstart and building energy and momentum in the CoP. It's a good idea to keep a running list of who agrees to do what to make it easier to recap at the end of the session.

Reflection: Move toward closing the session by inviting each person to reflect on the meeting/session. You might first take a moment to explain that taking a few moments for reflection at the end of each session is a good way to consolidate our learning and to keep our fingers on the pulse of the group. Then invite each person to respond aloud (if time allows) or in the chat box to these questions: *"As a result of today's conversation, what is one thing that's clearer to you about being part of this CoP and what is one question you are still holding about it?"*

Next Steps: Using the running list that you (or someone in the group you've designated) have been keeping throughout the session, review who has agreed to do what and when the next session will take place. Tasks and responsibilities on the next steps list might include who has agreed to:

- Draft the CoP mission statement;
- Draft the CoP norms;
- Set up a closed Facebook group (or other platform) for the CoP;
- Compile a master list of topics/questions of interest to the group;
- Prepare to present or facilitate the next session by, e.g. preparing a case study, finding an article, inviting a guest expert, or developing a facilitation plan and protocol.

Close the session by congratulating the group on a great start and expressing optimism and excitement about the CoP's future and value to everyone!

Desired Outcomes

By the end of the meeting, CoP participants will have:

- Gotten to know one another a little better and be aware of one another's hopes for the CoP;

- Agreed on important aspects of the group's mission, procedures it will follow, and norms and expectations that will govern its activities;
- Generated a list of topics of interest to members of the group as foci for future CoP discussions; and
- Agreed to next steps and responsibilities for convening and leading the next few sessions of the CoP.