

Guidelines for Managing Steering Committee Membership for CARL Communities of Practice

Prepared in August 2024 by the CARL Team

To ensure the effective functioning of Steering Committees (SC), Planning Groups, and Engagement Teams* of CARL's Communities of Practice (CoPs), CARL provides the following guidelines to support the process of managing SC membership. These guidelines aim to balance continuity, flexibility, the introduction of fresh perspectives, and fairness in the SC membership process. Additionally, they are designed to foster the self-sufficiency of SCs, helping them manage their membership processes independently.

*Note: Throughout this document, "SC" will be used to refer collectively to Steering Committees, Planning Groups, and Engagement Teams—groups responsible for overseeing communities of practice.

SC membership size: CARL recommends that each SC consist of anywhere between 4-8 members. The exact number should be tailored to the size, scope, and activity level of the CoP. A smaller SC may be more agile and easier to coordinate, while a larger SC can bring in a broader range of expertise and perspectives. Regular reviews of the SC size should be conducted by the SC to ensure it remains aligned with the evolving needs of the CoP.

SC membership composition: Each SC should be composed of members from the CoP who have a strong commitment to the community's mission and are willing to dedicate 5-10 hours per month to advance its work. Each SC should include either one chair or two co-chairs. Membership may include both CARL and non-CARL members, depending on the specific mandate of each CoP SC.

Standard term length: The standard term length for any SC member is 2 years. This provides sufficient time for members to contribute effectively while ensuring opportunities for new members to join.



Term renewals: At the end of their term, SC members may renew their term if they wish to continue. This helps retain members who are performing well and want to continue to offer their valuable experience. While there is no limit on the number of term renewals, members are encouraged to consider making space for others in the community to bring in fresh ideas and perspectives.

Chair election process: Chairs or co-chairs are generally nominated and selected through a collegial process by the SC members. This election should occur every 2 years, coinciding with the end of the chair's or co-chairs' term. To promote continuity and fresh leadership, it's encouraged to consider rotating the chair role, allowing different SC members the opportunity to take on this leadership position.

SC member selection practice: The usual selection practice involves a call for members that is issued by the CARL staff liaison; those interested in joining the SC submit an expression of interest. The call is shared with the CoP at large and other appropriate communication channels, such as the CARL website, Twitter, and e-Lert. SC members are selected by the chair or co-chairs and the CARL staff liaison. The selection may be reviewed by the appropriate Strategic Committee board or representative who oversees the CoP in question. Members are selected to ensure broad representation, i.e. geography, membership in CARL, institutional size, years of experience, bilingualism, etc.

Staggered terms: We recommend implementing staggered terms so that only a portion of the SC is up for election each year. This ensures continuity and retains experienced members while allowing for new members to join. Ideally, there should be 1-2 new members to a SC every two years.

Tracking terms: We recommend maintaining a calendar that records when each SC member started their term and when their term is set to expire. This helps in planning elections, renewals, and identifying when to initiate calls for new members. This is best managed by the chair or co-chairs.

Process for early departure: If a member leaves before completing their two-year term, the chair or co-chairs should assess whether a replacement is

needed. If the number of members falls below the ideal range, a call for interest should be initiated. This ensures that the SC remains fully staffed and continues to function effectively.

Process when a term expires: As a member's term approaches expiration, the chair or co-chairs should contact them to inquire if they wish to renew their term. If they decide not to renew, the chair or co-chairs should evaluate the need for a replacement and initiate a call for interest if necessary.

SC members who are inactive: SC members are expected to actively participate in the work of the CoP. If a member becomes inactive, the chair or co-chair should approach them to discuss their engagement and confirm whether they wish to continue their involvement with the SC. If the member is unable to fulfill their responsibilities or chooses not to continue, the chair or co-chair should assess the need for a replacement.

Process if no one wants to step off: If after two years all members have expressed a continued interest to renew their terms and there are no volunteers to step down, the chair or co-chairs should consider the following options to ensure opportunities for new members to contribute :

- a) Expansion option: Consider adding 1-2 new members to the CoP SC, only if determined that additional members are needed.
- b) Review current membership: Solicit volunteers from the current members who might be willing to step down to make room for new members.
- c) Call for expression and re-expression of interest: If no current members are willing to give up their spot, issue a call for interest to the CoP to find individuals interested in joining the SC. Existing SC members should also respond to this call and formally express their interest in continuing.
- d) Review and selection: Two suggestions:
 - i) Option 1: The chair or co-chairs, in collaboration with CARL support staff, will review all submissions from current members and new applicants to make the final selections.

- ii) Option 2: Implement an election process to select members. Current SC members vote anonymously on the submissions and re-submissions to select the new SC members.

Strategies for SC member recruitment: If the membership to the SC has been deteriorating over the years, we recommend the following strategies to boost participation:

- a) Put out a call for interest in broad dissemination.
- b) Ask members of the CoP during the next community event if they are interested in joining the SC.
- c) Ask current members of the SC if they know someone who would be interested in joining the SC.
- d) Share the call for interest in other related communities or groups.

For further support or additional questions regarding CARL Communities of Practice, please contact Taleen Aktorosian, taleen.aktorosian@carl-abrc.ca.