

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE SCAN AND REPORT

For Citizenship and Immigration Canada

By OCASI-Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

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Objective

The purpose of this research is to provide Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) with information on existing Communities of Practice (CoP) and the extent to which they provide options, lessons learned and best practices for the proposed settlement sector Community of Practice. The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) was tasked with developing a template for a comparative scan, populating the scan with information acquired from online research and completing a brief report. The following report and scan summarize the main trends, best practices and recommendations for a settlement sector Communities of Practice.

Community of Practice: Definition

Communities of Practice can be described as “...groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

[\(Wenger, 2006\)](#). A group in individuals who engage in peer learning can take many forms. For the purpose of this study, a Community of Practice, from here on referred to as a “CoP”, refers to an online platform which members must join in order to share resources, take part in discussions and engage in professional development.

Methodology

OCASI developed a template for the comparative scan in consultation with CIC staff. The scan was developed using Google Forms. Ten CoPs were then identified in order to represent the most significant existing CoPs in the settlement sector and related sectors (e.g. housing, employment, legal education, language instruction). In addition, an effort was made to identify government CoPs that engage the public on an ongoing basis. Several government-led CoPs were included in the scan in order to identify best practices for the proposed settlement sector CoP. Patterns identified in the research process regarding the landscape of CoPs in both the settlement and public sector were also noted in the report.

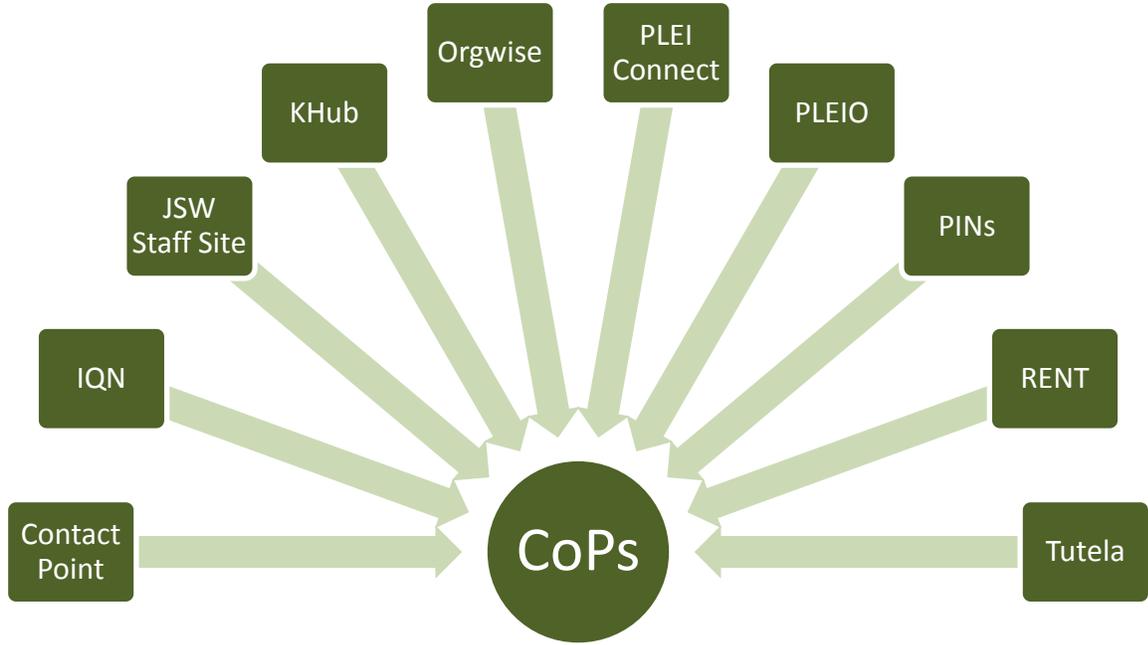
The scan was populated through internet research. The researcher joined each CoP as a registered user in order to assess the various features, activity levels and usability. Visible

features were noted and general impressions recorded. After all ten CoPs were researched; common trends which facilitated active CoPs were identified and highlighted in the report as best practices. The report assessed both the technical features of CoPs and the human aspects such as activity levels and moderator involvement. Based on the research and analysis of the findings, recommendations for an engaging and relevant settlement sector CoP were presented.

CoPs Included in the Scan

Reviewed CoPs

Below is a list of the CoPs included in the scan along with a brief description of each. They are divided into two categories, settlement sector CoPs and public sectors CoPs.



SETTLEMENT SECTOR COPS

Due to the amorphous nature of the settlement sector, related human service sectors that serve immigrants were also included.

Note: All figures listed as accurate as of February 2014 unless otherwise indicated.

Name	Brief Description
Contact Point	<p>Summary: A CoP for professionals in the career development field. A project of the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC). There are 1,211 active members.</p>
	<p>Features include: Organic (private/custom) discussion groups, Webinars for members, Commenting/rating of content, Video content, Subgroups, Wiki, Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Add members as friends , Tag system, Event listing</p>
International Qualifications Network (IQN)	<p>A CoP for professionals and organizations involved in issues related to international qualifications assessment and/or recognition or who have a vested interest in the topic. A project of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). It has over 300 members.</p>
	<p>Features Include: Webinars for members, Commenting/rating of content, Able to save/bookmark content, download VCards, translation function, subgroups, Log-ins, Library of resources, Member directory, Add members to your network, Event listing, keywords are listed, Tag Systems</p>
Job Search Workshop (JSW) Staff Site	<p>A CoP for staff who deliver the Job Search Workshop (JSW) Program. A project of COSTI Immigrant Services and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). There are fewer than 300 users.</p>
	<p>Features include: Webinars for members, Video content, Polls/surveys, Log-ins, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Photos, Event listing</p>
Orgwise	<p>A CoP for the Executive Directors of OCASI Member Agencies. A project of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).</p>
	<p>Features include: Webinars for members, Video content, indications if a discussion forum thread is new, popular or locked; Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Event listing, event calendar</p>
PLEI Connect	<p>A CoP for Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) professionals. It is part of the project “Just a Click Away” led by the Courthouse Libraries of B.C. in collaborations with other agencies across Canada. There are fewer than 400 members.</p>
	<p>Features include: Organic (private/custom) discussion groups, Webinars for members, Commenting/rating of content, Video content, Able to save/bookmark content, Create your own blog, Subgroups, Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Tag system, invite people to join the CoP,</p>

Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs)	A CoP for Individuals, professional immigrant networks and stakeholders concerned with skilled immigrant employment and labour market integration in Canada. A project of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC). There are approximately 200 members.
	Features include: Organic (private/custom) discussion groups, Webinars for members, Video content, webinars (linked to on other sites), Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Event listing
Resources Exist for Networking and Training (RENT)	A CoP for housing workers. A project of the East York East Toronto Family Resources (EYET). There are over 1000 registered users.
	Features include: Video content, Indicates if there is a cold alert; housing listings, Searchable member directory by agency, population served, language, type of agency and location, Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Member directory, Event listing, Online Workspaces, news section, job postings,
Tutela	A CoP for English and French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) professionals. A project of Citadel Rock Online Communities. There are 1384 resources, 1898 discussion posts and 5941 users.
	Features include: Organic (private/custom) discussion groups, Webinars for members, Commenting/rating of content, Video content, Able to save/bookmark content, Subgroups; advanced search option, log-ins, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Add members to your network, Tag system, Event listing; Discussion groups, job listings,

PUBLIC SECTOR COPS

Some examples of active public sector CoPs were selected.

Name	Brief Description
Knowledge Hub (KHub)	A CoP for municipal government workers in the United Kingdom. A project of the Local Government Association now administered by CapacityGRID Knowledge Hub Limited. It has 163 000 users, 3700 blogs and 800 000 discussion posts (December 2013).
	Features include: Live chat, Organic (private/custom) discussion groups, Commenting/rating of content, Video content, Create your own blog, Subgroups, Wiki, different privacy settings, Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Add members to your network, Tag system, Photos, Event listing, news feed, groups
PLEIO	A CoP for Dutch public servants and the general Dutch public. It is a project of the Dutch government, administered by the PLEIO foundation.

	<p>It has 71248 registered users.</p> <p>Features include: Commenting/rating of content, Smartphone apps, Video content, Able to save/bookmark content, Create your own blog, Subgroups, Polls/surveys, Log-ins, Discussion groups, Library of resources, Member directory, Share content with other members, Add members as friends , Tag system, Photos, Event listing,</p>
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ADDITIONAL COPS

Due to time constraints, some interesting CoPs could not be included in the scan.

These include:

- **SickKids Online Cultural Competence Community of Practice**

The SickKids New Immigrant Support Network (NISN) Train the Trainer (TtT) program has a community of practice on LinkedIn. The administrator invites trainers through LinkedIn. It is a closed CoP by invitation only with 24 members.

From the SickKids website:

SickKids Cultural Competence Community-of-Practice (CoP) is a web-based communication and networking forum for use by participants of the TtT workshops.

The CoP provides an open, safe and professional forum for TtT participants. Through the CoP, participants can support the sustainability and dissemination of knowledge and resources to enhance the delivery of culturally competent practice across the health-care system.

The CoP is hosted and monitored by the NISN on LinkedIn. To join, TtT participants will be sent an email invitation via LinkedIn after attending their workshop.

- **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Refugee Health Project Community of Practice**

The Refugee Mental Health Project CoP is intended for settlement workers and health care professionals participating in refugee mental health courses. There are monthly webinars and there are subject matter experts who provide feedback and advice in

response to questions. The CoP is operated on the D2L system. This CoP complements an e-learning curriculum.

Both the SickKids Online Cultural Competence Community of Practice and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Refugee Health Project Community of Practice would be considered “alternative communities of practice” (more information further in the report) in the context of this report.

Trends

Trends for Settlement Sector CoPs

Settlement Sector CoPs covered both individual projects (e.g. PINs, Job Search Workshops) and subfields within or related to the sector (for example ESL/FSL instruction, housing, career development etc.). The level of sophistication and activity between different settlement sector CoPs varied widely. Although some of the main activities related to newcomer support such as language instruction, housing support, job-search support, international qualification assessment and agency management, had relevant CoPs; there are significant absences in the field. Some areas which do not have CoPs include settlement counselling, intake, youth programming, Community Connections and citizenship preparation. It is also worth noting that although many of the CoPs share a common goal of improving newcomer settlement, many have much broader mandates and audiences. For example, Contact Point, RENT and PLEI Connect are intended for workers who serve the general public as well as newcomers.

Through the research process it was relatively easy to identify Settlement Sector communities of practice due to OCASI’s position in the field and the limited number of robust, active CoPs. We believe that the majority of significant CoPs in the sector are included in the scan.

ALTERNATIVE COPS IN THE SETTLEMENT SECTOR

In addition to the CoPs identified in the scan, there are other ways in which settlement sector practitioners share ideas and resources. These include listservs, wikis, social media, e-learning, discussion forums and in-person events. Although these are not formally CoPs as defined in this report, they serve a similar purpose.

Listservs

Listservs are email lists for people with a common interest, usually with certain guidelines for participation. Some of the most popular listservs in the settlement sector are the **Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)** listserv and the **OCASI Issues** listserv. Both focus on immigration and settlement policies and programming. Many of the emails involve an individual asking a question and various members of the group providing advice to the individual. In addition, when a new policy and operational change comes into place, many users write to compare their experiences and share strategies on how to adjust to the changes.

Wikis

Wikis are web applications that allow people to post information, edit and delete content in collaboration with other users. Posts are written in rich text editors or in wiki markup language. **SettlementatWork.Org**, administered by OCASI, has a [wiki](#) for the Ontario Immigrant-serving sector. Although the wiki serves as a useful resource for the sector, there is limited activity from users other than OCASI.

Social Media

Many settlement sector workers exchange ideas, resources and news on social media. Many settlement agencies have a Facebook presence and/or Twitter feed. On Twitter various hashtags serve as convenors for discussions and information-sharing for settlement professionals. One of the most popular hashtags is #CdnImm (Canadian Immigration) where issues related to immigration and newcomer settlement are discussed. Other hashtags frequently used include: #cdnrfg (Canadian Refugee), #diversity, #inclusion and #NewCdns (New Canadians).

LinkedIn is also a popular forum to share resources and ideas. LinkedIn is a professional networking site and therefore already has many of features needed by a CoP. Some LinkedIn groups serve as CoPs, such as the [Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion LinkedIn group](#). Others form an online profile in order to connect with members. An example of a profile-driven group is the [SickKids Cultural Competence Community-of-Practice \(CoP\)](#).

E-learning

Many courses have online platforms similar to CoPs for students to collaborate and learn by discussing the course material with classmates. Although similar to the CoPs identified, these online communities usually only last for the duration of the course. **The LearnAtWork.ca** courses, administered by OCASI, are an example of online professional development that incorporates some aspects of CoPs.

Discussion Forums

Discussion forums are online areas where members can discuss different ideas through online comments. In most cases, they are in a question and answer format and have a moderator. The most robust discussion forum in the settlement sector is likely the Settlement.Org discussion forum, administered by OCASI. The forum has over 36,000 registered users. It should be noted, however, that the forum is intended for newcomers rather than settlement workers.

In-Person Events

Lastly, in-person events are perhaps the most traditional CoP in the sense that they give practitioners and opportunity to exchange ideas, best practices and collaborate in order to improve their practice. These events are numerous, but some examples include the OCASI #CdnImm events, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) professional development events, and seminars organized by various colleges and universities.

Trends for Public Sector CoPs

One of the goals of this report was to examine government-led CoPs that engage the public on an ongoing basis. This proved to be extremely difficult, as we found very few CoPs that matched this description. A Dutch CoP, PLEIO, was recommended, however we could not find any in Canada. In addition, a British CoP was identified which was open to the public, however was intended exclusively for local government public servants.

Throughout the course of our research we noticed that there were two common types of public sector CoPs:

- **CoPs Exclusively for Government Workers.** The most obvious example of this GCPedia, an internal Government of Canada Wiki. There are also subgroups such as the Federal Youth Network and the Community of Federal Regulators.
- **Engagement Websites for the Purpose of a Short-Term Consultation.** Interactive websites (which could be viewed as an extremely limited Community of Practice) were somewhat common. An example of this was the internal consultation for Government of Canada employees, [Blueprint 2020](#). Another example of a consultation by the Government of Canada with the public was [Let's Talk...Weather](#) / [Parlons...meteo!](#)

Best Practices

Several best practices were identified for successful CoPs. These were in reference to a CoP's design, maintenance and technical features.

DESIGN AND HUMAN INVOLVEMENT

Active Moderator(s)

Successful CoPs had at least one very active moderator. The moderator completed tasks such as welcoming new users, posting discussion questions, sharing resources and promoting participation. Some CoPs had an "introduction" section where each new user was welcomed by the moderator. Other moderators thanked users for posting and set the (positive) tone for the online community.

A Large Pool of Potential Users

For a CoP to remain active there needs to be a large base of potential users. Some CoPs had a very narrow scope resulting in a small pool of engaged members. For example, the number of people who identify as being "Public Legal Education and Information" professionals is quite low, thus providing a possible reason for the relatively low participation rates in the PLEI Connect CoP.

Common Purpose/Framework

In order for resources and conversations in a CoP to be interesting and relevant to users, they must share common background and goals. One of the reasons why Tutela is so successful may be because the daily tasks of users are very similar. Most users are involved in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, and therefore have a common understanding of the needs and challenges involved in delivering the program. They also have common reference points, such as the different LINC levels and Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels. By contrast, Orgwise or PLEI Connect users do not have the same common established framework in which they complete their work.

Alternative Engagement Methods

Some CoPs allow users to stay connected without logging in to the platform. For example, Tutela also has an active Twitter feed and newsletters. This type of outreach allows users to stay “in the loop” without visiting the CoP and also reminds them of the resources and posted that may be relevant to them. Many CoPs send email alerts or emails mirroring the discussion forums. This allows users to maintain interest in the CoP.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

There are many technical aspects which improve the likelihood of a successful CoP. The most important technical aspects are related to the usability and visual appeal of a CoP.

Usability

- **Intuitive design:** CoPs that are easy to navigate are more successful. Some CoPs mimicked common social networking sites such as Facebook, likely making them easier for users to use.
- **Search function:** CoPs with search functions were much easier to navigate than those without this feature.
- **Interactive:** Features that allow users to interact with each other and the moderator make it more interesting. For example, features such as being able to comment on posts, rate resources and add people to your network are desirable.
- **Organized:** Resources organized in logical subcategories are much more user friendly than those without any obvious classification system.

Visually aspects

- **Photos and images:** CoPs with inviting, dynamic images were most appealing.

- **Colourful:** CoPs with bright, inviting colours were most engaging.
- **Clean design:** CoPs with a clean design and some empty space were most attractive. Many CoP appeared overly dense and thus unattractive.

Barriers to Success

CoPs that do not follow the above mentioned best practices are more likely to experience stagnation rather than flourish. However, there are also other barriers which may prevent CoPs from being successful. These reasons are more subtle than simply the design and maintenance of a CoP. Nonetheless some of these more nuanced barriers to success should be considered.

The following factors have the possibility of hindering the success of a CoP:

A Reluctance to Share Resources

Although most settlement agencies are not-for-profit organizations, they still develop resources which are of value and are considered proprietary. For example, intake forms, lesson plans, program outlines and client agreements may all be considered the exclusive property of the organization. Similarly, individual settlement workers, language instructors, or employment counsellor may have developed strategies and resources that they feel set them apart. Some individuals may be reluctant to share the intellectual property that they have developed with others. Of course, the willingness of each organization and individual to share resources with other CoP members varies considerably.

Limited Technical Skills of Settlement Sector Workers

Settlement work and related fields (e.g. language instruction, employment counselling, housing work) do not traditionally require advanced computer skills. In addition, the education and training of workers in these fields varies immensely. Therefore, a minimum level of computer literacy should not be assumed.

A Preference for Face-to-Face Communication

Beyond the basic technical skills needed to engage in a CoP, there is also a cultural shift that is required in the sector. Traditionally, many settlement sector practitioners communicate by

phone, in-person or by email. Learning to collaborate with colleagues on an online platform will require a cultural shift for many workers in terms of adjusting their working styles.

A Disconnect Between Daily Tasks and the CoP

Many CoPs serve as a way to promote professional development, stimulate innovation and identify best practices. However, these activities are often above and beyond the day-to-day responsibilities of settlement practitioners. As there are limited human and financial resources in the sector, many workers do not have time to engage in activities that are beyond their job description. If a CoP does not have direct relevance to the daily tasks of workers, it is unlikely to have a high participation rate.

Lack of a Common Framework

CoPs work well when everyone is working within a common framework and objective. For people who deliver standardized programs such as LINC and Citizenship classes, there is a common frame of reference for discussions. Other roles, however, vary widely between organizations which can make it hard to foster a common discussion.

Research Limitations

Several items in the scan proved to be more difficult to ascertain than expected. For example, many CoPs did not have information regarding the number of users or posts readily available. In addition, the assessment of activity levels was based on recent months, rather than the entire lifespan of a CoP. The assessment regarding government involvement and resources were difficult to decipher due to the volume of posts and resources in each CoP. It should also be mentioned that the observations noted were conducted under a time restrictions, and therefore it is possible that some of the more subtle features of the CoPs were not recorded.

Recommendations

Based on this research, it is recommended that the proposed CoP:

- Targets people who work within a common framework and with shared learning objectives
- Is actively moderated in order to encourage engagement
- Is visually appealing and easy to use
- Does not require advanced computer skills
- Uses alternative engagement methods, such as social media or emails, in addition to the main platform
- Is integrated into the daily workflow of users

The best practices outlined earlier in the report should also be followed in order to ensure a successful CoP.

Appendix A: Breakdown of Data (with explanatory notes)

Organization / Author Type

What kind of group manages the CoP?

The majority of CoPs were administered by non-profit organizations. Two were administered by a federal government agency (IQN and PLEIO) and only one, Tutela.ca, by a for-profit organization.

Federal Government Agency	2
Other Government Agency	0
Non-Profit Organization	7
For-Profit Organization	1

Funder

Who is the funder?

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) funds many of the CoPs in the scan. Other funders include the Counselling Foundation of Canada (ContactPoint); the Law Foundation of Ontario

and the Department of Justice Canada (PLEI Connect); the Federal Homelessness Partner Initiatives and Provincial Homelessness Initiatives Funds (RENT); the Dutch government (PLEIO); and the United Kingdom government (Knowledge Hub). Orgwise is funded by both CIC and the Trillium Foundation.

CIC	5
Other	6

Registration Process

Most CoPs (7) did not authorize users to join immediately. Rather there was an approval process and typically a one to four day waiting period before an account was approved. As most of the CoPs had very specific audiences, it is not surprising that they included an approval process. Approval depended on factors such as being part of a list of approved organizations, working in specific sectors or being an active member in a certain project. The CoPs which provided immediate registration were Contact Point, the Knowledge Hub and PLEIO. Only PLEIO had a very general audience (public servants and the public) while Contact Point and the Knowledge Hub had specific audiences. Therefore, it is unusual that the later organizations did not have an approval process in place.

Immediate	3
Upon Approval	7

Terms and Conditions

Does the CoP have Terms and Conditions users must agree to?

The majority (8) of the CoPs had terms and conditions posted on the site. Some of them asked users to agree to them as part of the registration process but many were simply posted on the CoP. Terms and conditions generally referred to the legal aspects of participating in a CoP and often outlined an expected code of conduct for users.

Yes	8
No	1
Can't tell	1

Platforms Used

What platform is used?

A variety of platforms were used for the CoPs. The most popular one (4 CoPs) was Drupal. Other platforms used included Elgg, Tiki and WordPress. In addition, some CoPs such as IQN and RENT, had custom platforms.

Drupal	4
Elgg	1
Proprietary	2
Tiki	1
Wordpress	1
Can't tell	1

Platforms Ownership

Is the CoP using proprietary or open-source software?

The majority (7) of the CoPs were open-source. A few (3) were proprietary.

Open-source	7
Proprietary	3

Copyright of Submitted Data

Who owns the content posted?

Some CoPs outlined the ownership of content posted in the terms and conditions. The majority stipulated that they had ownership of content posted, while only one said that the user owned the content they posted. Many terms and conditions did not clearly outline the copyright issues. Some stipulated that users were responsible for their postings, but did not clearly state whether or not they owned the content.

Community of Practice	4
User	1
Can't tell	5

Best Practices Capability

Does the site have a capacity to share "best practices"?

Many CoPs had the capacity to share best practices. For several CoPs it was difficult to ascertain if they specifically had this feature.

It should be noted that this question allowed a lot of room for interpretation. While some CoPs clearly had a section entitled “Best Practices”, many had a section with a similar purpose but different wording. Alternatively some CoPs did not have this section (or similar), yet the users tended to post best practices anyhow, despite the fact that this was not stipulated. Therefore, it would not be inaccurate to say that *all* CoPs had the capacity to share best practices. The answers below however, indicate which ones explicitly have a best practice section (or very similar).

Yes	5
No	0
Can't tell	5

Number of Forums/Subgroups

Is the CoP only one space or is it segmented?

Some CoPs had only one integrated (4) space while others (6) had many subgroups.

One integrated Space	4
1 subgroup (in addition to main space)	1
2 subgroup (in addition to main space)	0
3 subgroup (in addition to main space)	0
4 subgroup (in addition to main space)	0
5 subgroup (in addition to main space)	5

Outreach Tools

What outreach tools are used?

The CoPs used a variety of outreach methods. The most popular were e-newsletters, email alerts of new content and Twitter. The categories of email alerts for new content and email mirroring of discussions were collapsed for the purpose of the analysis as they were very similar. The outreach tools used which were not part of the survey questions included video demonstrations and YouTube videos. It is possible that some CoPs had in-person

demonstrations and webinar demonstrations; however there were no obvious indications of such outreach strategies.

E-newsletters	6
Email Alerts for new Content/ email mirroring of discussion	6
In-Person Demos	0
Webinar Demos	0
Newsfeed (RSS or other)	4
Twitter	5
Facebook	1
LinkedIn	1
Other	Video demos; YouTube

Perceived User Activity

How much user activity has there been in the past year?

Many of the CoPs were very active. Others had more sporadic user involvement.

High Level of User Activity (daily or almost daily)	5
Some User Activity (at least weekly)	2
Low levels of user activity (every month or every few months)	1
No longer in use	0
Other	2 CoPs have a few posts a month (between low and some user activity)

Government Resources for Download

Are there official reports, forms, manuals etc. posted?

Some CoPs included government resources such as forms and manuals. However, it was difficult to assess the number of government resources in a CoP.

Extensive	0
Moderate	2
Very little	2
None	1

Can't Tell	5
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Government Participation in CoPs

Does the Government actively participate in the CoP?

Most CoPs had very little involvement (other than funding) from the government. The IQN CoP had the most obvious involvement from the government as it is administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

Yes	1
No	7
Somewhat	2

Language Used

In what language is the CoP?

Most CoPs were in English (6), some were bilingual (3) and one was in Dutch with limited English.

English	6
French	0
Bilingual	3
Other	Dutch and limited English (1)

Standard Features

All CoPs had log-ins, libraries of resources and event listings. Additional features are listed below.

	Discussion Groups	Member directory	Share content with members	Add members to your network/as friends	Tag system	Photos
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Tutela	x	x	x	x	x	
PLEIO	x	x	x	x	x	x
KHub	x	x	x	x	x	x
IQN		x		x	x	
Contact Point	x	x	x	x	x	
PINs	x	x	x			
PLEI Connect	x	x	x		x	
RENT	x	x				
JSW		x	x			x
Orgwise	x					

Additional features:

- Tutela: job listings, groups were open or restricted
- PLEIO: task section, question section
- Knowledge Hub: groups were open or restricted
- IQN: keywords are listed
- Contact Point: many subsections; listing of book reviews, digital copies of CERIC's publications
- RENT: online Workspaces, news section, job postings,
- JSW: "communication resources" such as logos, certificates, letterhead etc.

Innovative Features

Use of Innovative Technology

For the purpose of analysis subgroups and organic (private/custom) discussion groups were collapsed.

	Discussion groups/subgroups	Webinars	Commenting /rating content	Smart phone apps	Video	Bookmark/save content	Create a blog	wiki
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Tutela	x	x	x		x	x		
PLEIO	x		x	x	x	x	x	
KHub	x	x	x		x		x	x
IQN	x	x	x			x		
Contact Point	x	x	x		x			x
PINs	x	x			x			
PLEI Connect	x	x	x		x	x	x	
RENT					x			
JSW		x			x			
Orgwise		x			x			

Additional features:

- Tutela: advanced search option; ; PBLA progress report generator; member can connect by Twitter or LinkedIn
- PLEIO: “share files” functions allows users to send files with an expiry date and a message; birthday feature; “the wire” which serves as a version of Twitter for the CoP; ability to share pages on 300 social media sites; subsites
- Knowledge Hub: Responsive (recommends relevant groups and connections); you can add social media links to your profile and share resources through there.
- IQN: Download VCards; translation function
- Contact Point: share pages on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest
- RENT: cold weather alerts, housing listings, advanced search function for members
- JSW: polls/surveys; add Twitter or LinkedIn to profile
- Orgwise: indicated if a discussion thread is new, popular or locked

User Experience

The following rankings were based on the researcher’s perception of the user experience. This includes the usability of a CoP, whether it is visually attractive and the activity levels. These ratings were subjective and additional notes on the user experience can be found in Appendix B.

Excellent	Tutela, Contact Point,
Good	PINs, RENT, PLEI Connect

Fair	IQN, KHub, PLEIO
Poor	JSW, Orgwise

Appendix B: All Responses and Researcher's notes

A spreadsheet with the raw data from the survey and the researcher's notes is attached.