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15 December, 2004

USACE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (CoP) POLICY

1. PURPOSE. This policy provides guidance to and is applicable to all USACE organizational elements regarding Communities of Practice (CoP). This policy discusses the following aspects of CoP guidance: intent, operating principles, purpose and functions, roles and responsibilities, processes, resourcing and metrics. This policy is iteratively updated.

2. REFERENCES. The following documents provide supporting information.

- a. Army Regulation 25-1 Army Knowledge Management and Information Technology, June 2004
- b. USACE 2012: Aligning the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for Success in the 21st Century, October 2003
- c. USACE 2012 and Community of Practice (CoP), October 2003
- d. Learning Organization Doctrine, USACE, November 2003

3. DEFINITION.

- a. USACE 2012 defines Communities of Practice as follows:

Communities of Practice are made up of individuals who practice and share an interest in a major functional area or business line. They extend throughout the Corps. The engine is learning and the CoP is the history of that learning.

- b. Communities of Practice are intended to bring people who share an interest in a subject together to share and enhance the professional expertise of each member of the community. Communities of Practice will consist of individuals from across the Corps and the organizations, agencies and stakeholders the Corps supports and works with in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Communities of Practice are not intended to reflect functional stovepipes or regional organizations. While each community faces different challenges and different methods for successfully overcoming those challenges is expected, each community is a true reflection of One Corps. Any structure or procedure that impedes community-wide communication or access has no place in a USACE Community of Practice.

4. INTENT.

- a. The intent of USACE Communities of Practice is to enable each member to utilize the entire expertise of the community to solve problems while enhancing the expertise of each member. Simply put, communities will greatly improve the

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ability of their members to perform their jobs. In so doing, each community will enhance the Corps ability to support the Nation.

b. Each community will provide both personal and professional value to each member by providing support in each aspect of the work environment. Each community is focused on providing the individual tools to succeed and each community's success will be measured by the success of its members. Communities will extend across all boundaries to include all stakeholders with an interest in a business line to the maximum extent possible. The key member of any community is the individual member. Communities will be dedicated to creating an environment where each member can bring the entire expertise of the community to bear on solving problems.

5. OPERATING PRINCIPLES. USACE CoP operate within the following principles:

a. **Membership.** Each Corps employee is a member of at least one formal CoP. It is expected that some employees may be members of several CoP and anyone may join other CoP. Participation in a CoP is voluntary and encouraged. Each CoP has a leader supported by the membership, sub-CoP leaders and, a catalyst team or cell, that can address and facilitate issues facing the community. Members supporting the CoP may be located anywhere within USACE. Leadership of CoP and sub-CoP resides anywhere within USACE. CoP membership is encouraged to cross-functional perimeters, and is multidisciplinary in nature. Participation from organizations and stakeholders outside of USACE is encouraged. Indeed, it is difficult to envision a successful community without members from outside USACE.

b. **Organization.** There are 25 CoP in USACE. Each CoP can possess subordinate CoP (Sub CoP) to address specific business areas or interests. Each CoP extends throughout the organization without hierarchical reference or layering. There is no need for subordinate CoP at the Region, District or Center level. Discussion of regional and district issues will be encouraged in the context of USACE as a whole, available to all members. CoP operate concurrently with, but independent of, project-oriented business processes.

c. **Interoperability.** While it is recognized that each CoP faces different challenges and will operate slightly differently to overcome these challenges, all Corps CoP adhere to common operating principles, consistent policy processes, and strive to promote participation; interoperability and a free flow of information among CoP. Communication between communities should not be hindered by different platforms. CoP are an example of "One Corps" and the importance of the USACE mission requires all communities to be interoperable.

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d. Security. Anyone, inside or outside USACE, may be a CoP member, although CoP leaders will be responsible for security measures to ensure integrity of governmental operations, preservation of the pre-decisional process independent of unauthorized outside influence, protection of national security, and coordination of positions outside the Corps. Applicable regulations need to be followed in selecting members.

e. Values. Communities of Practice have been assigned functions and will work to achieve them. However, they exist to provide value to their members. As in any community, member participation is voluntary. While there will always be some people who do not participate, successful communities thrive through the voluntary involvement of their members. CoP are a clear example of “*One Corps operating virtually as a learning organization*”. There are no separate islands of learning. Members are eager and willing to learn and to dig in; Community members share their learning and knowledge to the benefit of others because there is value to them when they do. Strong, supportive CoP leaders value and encourage knowledge growth wherever it resides. Member contributions are recognized and lauded. Members are active listeners respecting other viewpoints. Members also are active contributors recognizing that all members are equal and have something of value to contribute. Leaders recognize member contributions, using incentives to encourage and stimulate membership activity. Leaders also leverage the personal and professional satisfaction that comes with CoP participation, and acknowledge expertise to encourage and engage the membership.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. Each USACE Employee. All Corps employees are members of at least one USACE Community of Practice. Primary community membership of each individual will be determined by that person’s duty position. This primary community will provide the best value to the individual such as professional development and community involvement. It is expected that each individual may belong to several different communities and sub-communities given both the collegial environment of the Corps and the interest of each employee. Each community member is responsible for active participation in the community. Community members are people who share an interest in a function, topic or problem. They are professionals who volunteer their organizational learning to other professionals within the community and across the Corps. They participate in member forums. They encourage networking between other communities, agencies, non-governmental organizations and private industry for the common good of the community. They may organize community events and help to keep the CoP vibrant. They take advantage of the opportunities their community offers to improve their technical expertise.

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b. CoP Leader. The leader provides high-level sponsorship and support for the CoP at-large and acts as the champion for the CoP. The leader promotes the value of membership across an organization, thereby encouraging CoP growth and commitment of organizational resources. More than one person may share leadership; this may be important if CoP membership spans multiple functions or business lines. Typically the organization is directly responsible for the operational aspects of career field or functional area around which the CoP is being formed. The organization believes in the value of knowledge sharing and commends participation in CoP activities. The CoP leader recognizes the differences between functional and community activities and encourages the best level of interaction between the two.

c. Sub-CoP Leader. Experienced, knowledgeable, and senior level USACE personnel, throughout the Corps serve as sub-CoP leaders. Sub CoP leaders perform the same role for their sub community as the CoP leader does for the overall community.

d. Corporate Community of Practice Representative. Each Community will name an experienced member to participate on the Corporate Community of Practice (CCoP). This individual will be the conduit of information between that community and those from around the Corps. The community representative will be asked to share best practices of the community and provide the community's position on issues that are discussed. As a result, a community's CCoP representative must have access to Leaders at both the Community and Sub Community level. A community CCoP representative will be prepared to actively participate in CCoP meetings and discussions.

e. Catalyst. Catalysts are CoP members who facilitate issues affecting their community. There is no limit to the number of catalysts a community can have. Catalysts will typically be members of their community policy development team and the **catalyst cell**. Catalysts are typically very passionate about their community and able to respond to fast moving issues. Catalysts can be named formally by CoP or Sub CoP leaders or assume the role voluntarily. Every member in a community is a catalyst to some extent.

7. FUNCTIONS. USACE 2012 assigns five functional tasks to each community. USACE CoP are not solely responsible for achievement of each task, for example, developing a capable workforce is also a requirement of the organizational chain of command where training dollars reside. However, each CoP will address these functions.

a. Development and Maintenance of Policy and Doctrine. Community of Practice are essential to development and maintenance of policy and doctrine. Community members will serve on project development teams that will develop policy and doctrine, and the community will identify issues and solutions and

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review documents prior to final publication. The Community provides input and influences development of relevant technical processes and policy, and establishes corporate technology practices. Soliciting and prioritizing CoP policy efforts, allocating policy enhancements, and communicating policy are CoP functions. Each community will develop a method to maintain all policy and doctrine applying to it.

b. Promote a Capable Workforce. Communities of Practice will take steps to develop and enhance the expertise of each member of the community. Each community will identify skills, knowledge and capabilities that contribute to successful mission execution while looking forward and determining what will be necessary for members to contribute in the future. Members will expect that their community will identify corporate training and development requirements and solutions, training requirements related to technology use; development of PROSPECT training courses and schedules, and provides or recommends instructors; establishment of developmental assignments. The CoP serves as the USACE Program Manager for the Career Program and supports implementing regulations, as well developing and validating national METL for CoP professionals and performs capability analysis of districts, regions and HQ.

c. Build and Maintain National Relationships and Coalitions. CoP engage external Federal Agencies, DoD Activities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), other external partners and stakeholders on multiple levels. Communities include members from outside agencies and stakeholders. Communities encourage involvement with related private, NGO, and professional organizations and websites and publications—such as Society of American Engineers (SAME). CoP members participate with DOD, Navy, Air Force and Army and other boards, committees, working groups and technical teams, such as tri-services specifications group. CoP partners with other Federal agencies and national level private sector and professional organizations on mutual areas of interest.

d. Promote Organizational Communication. CoP expand organizational communication by establishing community-wide communication with all of its members. This communication extends across all organizational and geographic boundaries and is not hindered by varying platforms. Members are positively identified and know how to communicate within the community. Member Forums are established where members can engage the entire community in pursuit of solutions. Communities break down organizational and geographic barriers. There is no reason for regional or organizational communities in an active, successful USACE CoP. Other steps improving organizational communication can include:

1. Publishing network directories to maintain communication

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- 2. Conducting frequent informal meetings/learning lunches on technical issues as raised by RIT or other USACE organizations
- 3. Support and update CoP website to provide effective knowledge management
- 4. Provide communication channels to related CoP websites both internal and external pertaining to regulations, laws, and policy for DOD, Army and related organizations.
- 5. CoP continue small and occasional face-to-face meetings to communicate a mix of management and technical subjects

e. Enhance the Learning Organization. CoP will enhance the learning organization by enabling each of its members access to information in two ways. Communities will maintain a repository that makes the experience of its member available. Policy and doctrine, lessons learned, best practices, contact information and many other sorts of information can be maintained in the repository. Communities also will provide a members forum open to all members where information can be shared. This forum, properly conducted, will allow problems to be solved and information to be shared across the entire community.

8. STRUCTURE

a. There are twenty-five communities in the Corps of Engineers. This number may grow or shrink over time based upon evolution of the concept and use of communities. Existing Communities are listed below.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Contracting | Corporate Information |
| Counsel | Equal Opportunity |
| Engineer Inspector General | Engineering and Construction |
| Environment | History |
| Homeland Security | Human Resources |
| Installation Support | Interagency/International Support |
| Internal Review | Logistics |
| Operations/Regulatory | Public Affairs and Communications |
| Planning | Project and Program Management |
| Real Estate | Research and Development |
| Resource Management | Small and Disadvantaged Business |
| Safety | Security, Law Enforcement |
| Strategic Planning | |

b. Each community faces different challenges and working environment. For example, while both the Engineering and Construction and the Small and Disadvantaged Business communities have stakeholders, an examination of those stakeholder groups and the issues involved with working with them are

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dramatically different. Another example is that of Counsel with its strong requirement for confidentiality compared to other communities where that requirement is not as necessary. As a result, it is expected that there will be differences in the operation and structure of each community as they evolve.

c. At a minimum, each community will have the following elements:

1. Community of Practice Leader
2. Sub Community Leaders if there are sub communities
3. Corporate Community of Practice Representative
4. A Catalyst Cell able to address and facilitate issues facing the community
5. Repository for information and instructions for use
6. Community-wide communications
7. Member Support Forum
8. A Community Charter, signed by the Chief of Engineers, detailing its mission, organization, and membership.

d. At this stage of development of CoP within USACE, it is expected that there will be differences in how each community approaches each of their requirements. As best practices are identified, these practices will then be applied across USACE. Several elements have already been discussed such as Leader, Sub CoP Leader and CCoP representative and each community will fill these roles. A description of other elements and expectations follows below:

1. Catalyst Cell. There will be issues that face a community that require addressing and facilitation. This is the responsibility of the Catalyst Cell. Typically headed by the CCoP Representative, this Cell is where issues will enter a community from outside its boundaries as well as questions raised within the Member Support Forum. The Catalyst Cell will identify where each issue should be sent for discussion and facilitate its handling. It is not expected that the Catalyst Cell solve these issues. Catalyst Cell members are typically named by CoP Leaders.

2. Repository for Information. Each Community will have specific information that will be of value to its members such as after action reports, standard operating procedures, and professional development tracks. Each CoP should have a location (repository) where this information can be electronically available for its members. Care should be given to selection of such a repository as they can be very time consuming and difficult to maintain. There may come a time when a single repository is available for all CoP and information should be in an easily transferable format.

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3. Community Wide Communications. Each Community will identify each of its members and ensure that community-wide communication is available to each member. This communication must possess clear identification of its author to enable rewards for excellence and maintain discipline. Each member should be aware that they are in a community and this easy step will go a long way in building cohesiveness.

4. Member Support Forum.

a. Each community will provide the capability for a member support forum. A member support forum allows the issue to be thrown into arena where the entire community can address it with full visibility. The entire expertise of the Community can be brought to bear. Issues, discussions and solutions are available to every member. This enables the Corps to react quickly to issues, leverage expertise and provide a learning environment for all members.

b. Most Community of Practice success stories involve this element. There are often times when members face problems that they cannot solve and does not have resources at their location. As the Corps becomes ever increasingly involved with contingency operations and faces a constrained funding environment, this will become an even more common experience. Another common issue is that problems are often raised in command channels and solved before without the community is even aware. This often sets precedent or uses imperfect information. A successful community will address that problem by raising the issue, discussing options and identifying solutions with the involvement of the entire community.

c. It is understood that this item is the largest challenge to existing culture, but it is an industry best practice that cannot be ignored. Implementation does not imply that any authority of the chain of command or the project manager is usurped. Rather, decisions by the those responsible will be made with better information and each member of the community will be aware of the decision and be able to apply it, if appropriate, in the problems that face that member.

9. PROCESSES. Standard CoP processes insure quality and consistency of outputs throughout the Corporate CoP family. Recognizing there will be differences in how each CoP approaches its requirements, the following four basic processes (collaboration,

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chartering, communication, content submission) describe a standard for who does what and when regarding the five functions of CoP.

a. Collaboration. The collaboration process is similar in nature to conducting business in a professional society. The process used in SAME and American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) where vetting takes place on an ongoing basis through committees and chapters is similar in nature to a CoP collaboration process. In communities Leaders, Catalysts and members work in concert to accomplish work. Depending upon the task, this could involve collaborative areas, community wide communications or the member support forum or combinations thereof. Project delivery teams made up of community members will collaborate on projects for later review of the community. Community membership will include individuals from inside and outside USACE to better identify issues and solutions.

b. Chartering. All CoP operate under a charter [see Appendix B] signed by the Chief of Engineers. CoP Leaders submit charters through HQUSACE Corporate Integration Directorate for a coordination and consistency. Sub-CoP operates within the bounds of the CoP charter and operates under the sponsorship and policies of the formal community. CoP follow the 10 Steps to CoP building (Appendix A) as a path to successful chartering.

c. Communication.

1. Energy, commitment, and encouragement in communication efforts are a must to ensure consistency of message and best utilization of resources. Communication is designed to create a continuous flow of information from each community to its members and to generate awareness. In addition, this communication is designed to alert community members of new functionality added to the CoP space. Communication methods include: promoting the CoP of practice through existing marketing channels, promoting CoP of practice events, articles and white papers, office bulletin boards, conferences and expos, brochures, other websites, scheduled e-mails from leaders and catalysts.

2. Several platforms are being utilized to support various communities. No single platform is available at this time to fully support all communities in USACE. While this may change in the future, current guidance regarding platforms is that those communities currently operating will remain with that platform unless it becomes apparent that transferring will enhance the community. Communities not yet using a platform have the choice of using any platform currently available within USACE. Whatever platform is selected must support community wide communications and the member support forum.

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d. Content Management. The CoP principles and information architecture are designed to encourage and allow maximum participation by CoP members, including contributing knowledge objects to the CoP knowledge repositories. This must be balanced with the need to ensure relevant authoritative, and fresh sources of information. The catalyst is the focus of good content management procedures. Leaders, sub-CoP Leaders assist in the community's quick and timely access to relevant and authoritative content. The following defines, at a high-level, the types of content and the business rules for content management:

1. Knowledge Object Types. The CoP, generally speaking, has sixteen (16) types of knowledge objects: announcements, business cards, case studies, CoP meetings, events, examples, learning materials, lessons learned, presentations, processes & methods, references, regulatory, related websites, testimonials, tools & forms. Each knowledge object has metadata associated with it. Some fields are required and must be completed during the submission process.

2. Content Submission Process. The process for member content submissions varies according to the CoP, knowledge area, or knowledge object type. The following minimum business rules for capturing, validating, refreshing, and expiring content are required: knowledge objects have assigned owners; knowledge objects have a required minimum set of associated metadata; appropriate knowledge objects have assigned expiration dates; knowledge objects are flagged for periodic review and potential disposal or archive.

10. RESOURCING. CoP activities and supporting systems are resourced from assets located throughout USACE. Resourcing of CoP activities is critical for success.

a. Planning and Programming of Resources. The Corporate Strategy and Integration Directorate (SID) in partnership with the Corporate Information Division is responsible for the planning, programming, and budgeting of USACE CoP resourcing requirements. For example, the planning and programming of annual resources to manage administration of CoP systems is a SID responsibility. Corporate Information Division provides Corps of Engineers Functional Assessment Team (CFAT) leadership in supporting CoP systems. CoP leaders submit on an annual basis their resource requirements that is consolidated by SID and integrated into the Command Budget process. SID is responsible for Corporate CoP policy and guidance.

b. The Corporate Community of Practice team will create guidance for use of identified funds.

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- c. Each Community will identify those costs necessary to support its success and submit resource requirements in accordance with identified guidance.

11. METRICS AND MILESTONES.

a. General.

1. Communities of Practice are engines of learning for each community member. Measuring progress and success in any learning environment is difficult. It is very easy in the search for metrics to fall into a checklist or web-click mentality. Neither approach will accurately gauge a community's progress. Merely creating a repository will not create learning and merely visiting that repository does not result in learning. It is also important to understand that communities have few operational capabilities and operational measurements will not be effective. Finally, return on investment metrics do not adequately address learning over the short term. The question of how to measure what a member might learn observing a discussion thread about an issue he himself might not run into for several years is real and must be answered in any return on investment metric discussion.
2. Ultimately, each community's success will come down to the level of participation by its members. If members themselves see no value to themselves, then participation will decrease to very low levels. Therefore, effective metrics over the long term will be those that address participation in all areas of the community.

b. Specific.

1. All USACE communities will be stood up by March 31, 2005. By this time each community will have a signed charter. This will require identification of members, filling of required positions as well as a community approach to repository, community-wide communication, and membership forum.
2. Each community will identify steps it has taken to meet the five functions assigned to it in USACE 2012 in an annual report to the Deputy Commanding General. This report will be submitted by June 15 and will include an evaluation of the effectiveness of each step taken.
3. Each Community leader is responsible for short-term milestones in chartering their CoP and long-term success metrics. Leaders determine how effective the CoP is in reaching and providing value to its members. CoP leaders obtain, share, and collaborate on best practices at Senior Leader events (ENFORCE and SLC) for cross CoP consistency of metrics.

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APPENDIX A: 10 STEPS TO COP BUILDING

CoP Building Steps	Output
<p>STEP 1 – Identify and establish core group of CoP stakeholders. Form a team that will serve as the catalyst for standing up the CoP. This core team will help to initiate the planning workshop by developing an agenda, identifying who should be at the session and ensuring a good representation of the CoP.</p>	<p>List of core members; Workshop date; Agenda; List of key invitees.</p>
<p>STEP 2 – Conduct core planning workshop. The workshop brings together a diverse set of CoP stakeholders to discuss the CoP concept and to begin to formulate the purpose and intent of the CoP.</p>	<p>CoP purpose and objectives; List of types of problems group is trying to solve; List of critical business issues; List of CoP stakeholders and target audience for CoP; List of CoP resources and roles, i.e., who will dedicate time and energy to establish the CoP, what monetary resources are available to support the CoP; List of preliminary knowledge assets: sources of information are available to populate the CoP site, where does the information reside; Type of virtual collaborative work environment that is best suited for the objectives of the CoP.</p>
<p>STEP 3 – Draft CoP charter. Each CoP will be required to establish a charter to address the items listed in Step 2 above. A draft charter has been created, and the template is available in Appendix B.</p>	<p>CoP charter.</p>
<p>STEP 4 – Plan for the Repository. Information such as regulations, pamphlets, after action reports and standard operating procedure will be developed and will have to be stored for community use. It is key that this is planned for</p>	<p>Repository Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What type of repository - Where will it be located - How will information be added, stored and

CoP Building Steps	Output
<p>and issues of growth, search capability and maintenance be addressed. The repository is a key element of the value proposition of any Community.</p>	<p>searched - Who will maintain it.</p>
<p>STEP 5 – Plan for Community Wide Communications. How the community communicates is key to success. Communication visible to all members is necessary to achieve cohesion and the learning aspects of the community. Each member should be identified and aware of how the community will communicate. Planning should account for contingencies and other fast moving events in austere communication environments.</p>	<p>Communications Plan</p>
<p>STEP 6 – Plan for Member Support Forum. The key value proposition of a community to its members is the ability to leverage the entire expertise of the community to solve problems. A community requires a forum where a member can ask a question that all members can see and comment on. Participation cannot be anonymous. This forum allows issues, discussions, and solutions to be shared with the entire community. It also identifies shortcomings in expertise.</p>	<p>Identification of Member Support Forum enabling tool and guidelines.</p>
<p>STEP 7 – Plan for Catalyst Cell. Issues will be brought to the community that will require addressing and facilitating. The Catalyst Cell is a group of motivated individuals identified by the Leader to handle such issues. The Cell does not necessarily solve problems, but facilitates their handling to the right part of the community.</p>	<p>Identify Catalyst members, guidelines for Cell operations and issue handling.</p>
<p>STEP 8 – Inform the Community and Implement. The Community is involved in the decision making process and final decisions are made and the community is stood up.</p>	<p>Activate Community, relationships formed; Discussions posted and answered; CoP meetings held.</p>
<p>STEP 9 – Market the CoP. Marketing the CoP can be accomplished in a variety of ways, from telling a friend, to passing out brochures at a conference, to e-mailing a news group, etc. Every member, and especially those assuming</p>	<p>Increased exposure for the CoP; Increased membership; More viable Community.</p>

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CoP Building Steps	Output
leadership roles, serves as an ambassador for his/her CoP. Spread the word!	
STEP 10 – Determine the effectiveness of the CoP. Each CoP may have a different method of determining the value or success of its endeavors. At some point, each CoP must take time to re-evaluate what has been accomplished – does it meet the CoP’s stated purpose and objectives?	Do CoP members find value, Is CoP achieving its objectives?

APPENDIX B: Community of Practice Charter

CoP Name:

(Identify the name of the CoP, i.e., Logistics CoP)

CoP Audience/Membership:

(Identify the functional types that the CoP is targeting or is trying to attract, i.e., DoD logistics workforce, logistics academics, industry partners working logistics, other individuals working related logistics areas, and the initial membership roster)

CoP Purpose/Functions:

(Identify the purpose/functions of the CoP, i.e., the CoP is focused on documenting, sharing, and transferring best practices.)

Sub-CoP (s):

(Identify the sub-CoPs within this CoP)

CoP Objectives:

(Identify the CoP objectives, i.e., the specific areas/issues that the CoP is interested in addressing.)

CoP Membership:

(Identify by name the individuals that are filling roles)

CoP Leader _____

Sub-CoP Leader (s) _____

Catalyst _____

SMEs (for each Sub-CoP) and Knowledge

Area _____

Business Technical Division Catalyst _____

Program Support Division Catalyst _____

Measures of Success:

(List measures of success as determined by the CoP.)