**Communities of Practice for Families and Children Activity services**

**INFORMATION SHEET**

***What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?***

A Community of Practice (CoP) is “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”.[[1]](#footnote-2) The group comes together to share information and undertake joint activities such as identifying common problems, problem-solving, mapping gaps in knowledge and learning from group members’ practice experiences.[[2]](#footnote-3)

FRSA’s Communities of Practice are delivered with the support of the Australian Institute of Family Studies and funded by the Department of Social Services. They are intended for providers of the following five programs, which are funded under the Department’s Families and Children (FaC) Activity:

* Family & Relationship Services (FaRS)
* Specialised Family Violence Services (SFVS)
* Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS)
* Child & Parenting Services (CaPS)/Budget Based Funded (BBF)
* Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FP)

***Are the FRSA CoPs new?***

FRSA has been running the online CoPs for the past 12 months and we’ll be delivering them again through 2023-24. Many participants from the 2022-23 CoPs will continue to participate but we are opening up the groups to new people as well.

***What can I expect to get out of participating?***

Through the CoPs we will provide participants with the opportunity to:

* connect and engage with sector peers
* share information, experience and practice knowledge
* problem solve and look for innovative ways to respond to common challenges
* identify challenges common across providers that may require external input/support.

***How will the CoPs work?***

Communities of practice work best when participants co-design how they want the group to work for them. Over 2022-23 all the groups agreed to principles of engagement or ‘ways we want to work together’ (e.g. encouraging open and frank engagement, respecting different views), and were invited to put forward topics for discussion or suggest how they would like the session to run (e.g. facilitated discussion, participant presentations, guest speaker presentations). We’ll do the same in 2023-24.

***Participants***

We are inviting program managers, and senior practitioners with knowledge of program-wide issues, to express their interest in participating in the CoPs, joining existing participants from the 2022-2023 groups.

***Commitment***

Each CoP Group will meet 5-6 times through the year. Each session will be scheduled for 1.5 hours and there may be a small amount of pre-reading/preparation required.

We encourage participants to attend as many sessions as they can, but we also recognize that at times it won’t be possible to attend a session. We will produce short discussion summaries after each CoP session to keep you in the loop and you can always ask a colleague to attend in your place if you can’t make a session.

***Meetings***

* Meetings will be held every 6-8 weeks. Meeting dates/times will be set by FRSA and we apologise in advance if they do not work for you.
* All meetings will be held online using Microsoft Teams
* Discussions will be facilitated by the FRSA CoP Project Officer
* The format of CoP sessions will be topic dependent (for example, participants may want to invite a guest speaker for certain topics).

***In-between meetings***

The CoP project officer will follow up on actions that may arise during CoP discussions – for example, circulating resources or following up with the Department of Social Services with specific program-related queries.

**If you have any questions about the CoPs, please contact FRSA’s Project Officer, Sandra Rabjohns:**

Ph: 02 6162 1811

Email: projects@frsa.org.au

**To register your interest in joining one or more of the CoPs please follow this** [**link**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZYTGK22)**.**

Note: Expressions of interest close COB Wednesday 19 July 2023.

1. Wenger, Etienne (2011) [*Communities of practice: a brief introduction*](https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/11736), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid., pp 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)