GUIDE COMPANION: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A journey of care, learning and collective results.

On behalf of:

Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Climate Action,
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

of the Federal Republic of Germany

IKI INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

This document is not a mandatory instruction manual or a set of rigid rules. It was designed as a **companion on the journey of your Community of Practice (CoP)**. The suggestions contained in here are invitations based on real experiences of other communities. Feel free to adapt, modify, or ignore what doesn't make sense for the specific context of your CoP. The goal is to support the autonomy and collective intelligence of the group, always keeping care for people as a central priority.

PART 1: FOUNDATION — CONCEPTION AND CREATION

1.1 Before you Begin

You have opened this guide because your Community of Practice (CoP) has just been born or is about to take its first steps. The question that usually arises is: "so now, how do we make this work in practice?". This guide assumes that the Community of Practice (CoP) is a **living space for learning** about how to work collaboratively. The roles described here are not fixed positions or rigid hierarchies; they are invitations to take care of specific dimensions that keep the community healthy. This guide is there to walk you through the space between initial excitement and the day-to-day of collaboration, giving you clarity and tools to make your community a place of life, not just another meeting on your calendar.

1.2 Resuming the Creation Workshop

The design thinking work carried out in the foundation of the CoP is its main orientation. The convergences found and the challenges mapped are what unite the group. We recommend periodically revisiting the fundamental questions: Why do we exist? What do we want to learn together? What kind of community do we want to be?

1.3 Regenerative Governance

Governance is simply **how we function as a group**. We call it regenerative because the focus is not to extract energy from people, but to create conditions for them to strengthen themselves while collaborating and thus be able to amplify their positive impact both within the group and outside. We base our work on four principles: **Inclusion, Psychological Safety, Transparency, and Consent.**

1.4 Central Message: Care and Legitimacy

The roles suggested here are not lifetime positions. If someone needs to stop energizing a role due to fatigue or a change in priorities, this is **valid and legitimate**. The community should be a space where you can speak the truth about personal boundaries without guilt.

1.5 Minimal roles and suggestions

To ensure that the CoP works without overload, we suggest dividing responsibilities into clear roles. The minimum would be to have a focal person or coordinator.

1. **Integration:** Guardian of purpose and "why" we are together.
2. **Facilitation:** Person who is the guardian of the limits, rhythms and sustainability of the group.
3. **Documentation/Knowledge:** Guardian of memory and collective treasure.
4. **Space Manager:** Person who is the guardian of the quality of synchronous and asynchronous time.

In addition to the four community management roles, a CoP may have a

5. **Product Manager:** if you decide to generate concrete deliverables to the external world (the latter is described in Part 2 of this manual).

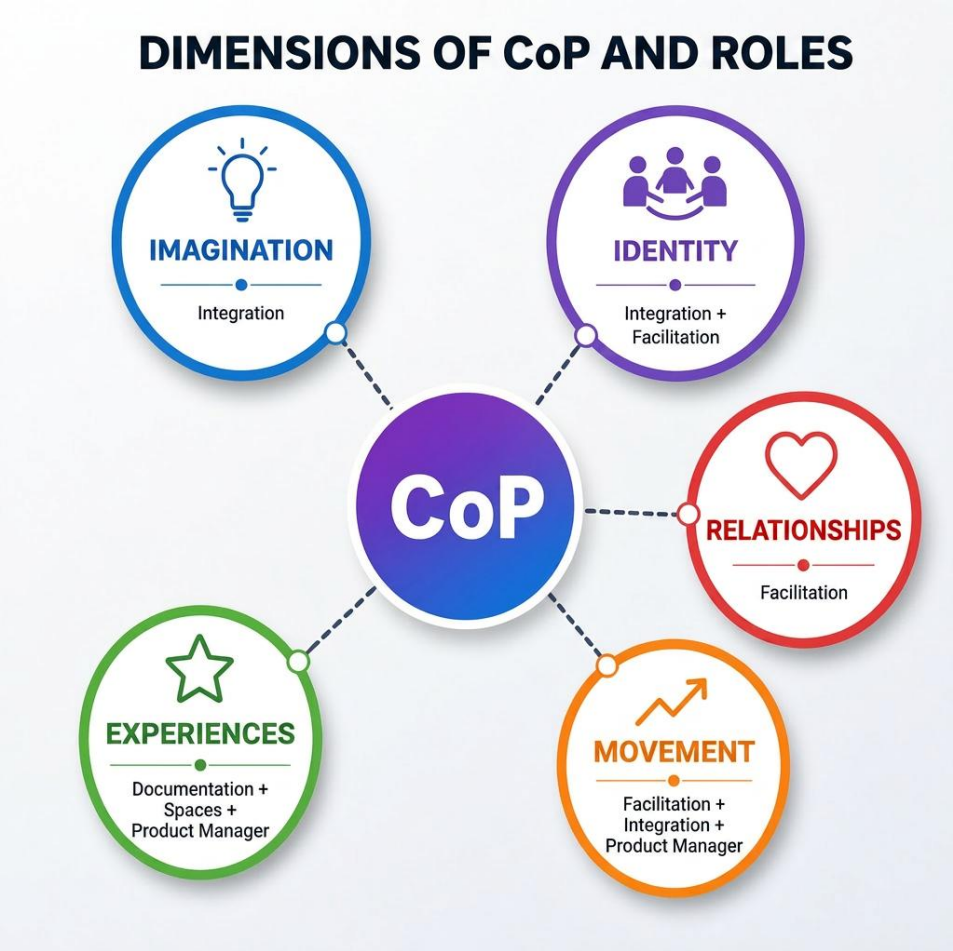

Diagram 1: The 5 Pillars of Connection Design (Instituto Amuta[i]), applied to the Communities of Practice and Associated Roles of the CoPs of the IKI Brazil network.

1.6 The Dance Between Roles

Governance is not hierarchy; it is coordination. The roles talk to each other to adjust the course. If Integration notices dispersion, it talks to Facilitation to understand if the pace is heavy or if the purpose needs revision.

1.7 The Ground where we walk

The CoP is a learning laboratory. Making mistakes is part of the process, as long as the error is shared and transformed into knowledge for the group.

PART 2: EACH ROLE IN DEPTH – FROM CALL TO ACTION

2.1 Integration: Caring for Purpose

This role looks at whether the conversations still make sense. This role focuses on the "why". The Integration person observes whether the CoP is deriving from its original mission or if the purpose needs to evolve. **Warning signs:** no one knows how to explain why the CoP exists or the meetings constantly drift to topics outside the scope. **Suggested practice:** carry out a quarterly check-in of alignment with the original proposal and an onboarding with new members so that they understand the essence of the group.

2.2 Facilitation: Taking Care of Boundaries and Rhythms

It focuses on human sustainability. Facilitation takes care of the **"how"**. It is responsible for ensuring that meetings are productive and that the climate is one of psychological safety. Define thematic focus, objectives and agenda with the core of the community, ask powerful questions, time management and synthesis at the end. It maintains the balance between autonomy, guidance, support and expectation of contribution. It serves as the focal point for the IKI Brazil Interface. This role also monitors signs of overload and proposes adjustments in the cadence of meetings to maintain the sustainability of the group. **Warning signs:** systematic absences, people saying they "don't have time" or signs of burnout. **Suggested practice:** propose breaks or changes in cadence (e.g., from weekly to biweekly) when fatigue is visible.

2.3 Documentation: Caring for Memory

It prevents knowledge from being lost. This role takes care of living memory. It is not about bureaucratic minutes, but about capturing learnings, impact stories and decisions in an accessible way. The Documentation makes the value generated by the CoP visible to the members and to the organization. **Warning signs:** documentation has become a burden for one person or no one can find the information. **Suggested practice:** collective synthesis in the last 5 minutes of each meeting.

2.4 Space Manager: Taking Care of Time

It takes care of the infrastructure and the quality of the presence. It takes care of the "where". Whether in the digital or physical environment, this role ensures that the space invites participation. It also fosters recreational meetings without an agenda, which are essential to strengthen interpersonal bonds beyond work tasks. **Warning signs:** always rushed meetings or chaotic asynchronous channels (Slack/WhatsApp). **Suggested practice:** ensure moments of "coffee without an agenda" to strengthen personal bonds.

2.5 Product Manager: Taking Care of Deliveries

This role operationally manages the products that the community has decided to create. The person with that role has **decision-making authority in the operational domain** (deadlines and tasks), but acts in constant dialogue with the

other roles. The person coordinates with the **Space Manager** to align product meeting times and avoid overlaps with the overall CoP agenda.

PART 3: SURFING THE TENSIONS — CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY

3.1 How to use this section

We mapped out possible stones in the path of this year-long journey. Tensions are not problems to be eliminated, but information about what needs attention. We decided not to prescribe solutions, but to offer alternatives for inspiration. Use the table below to identify what is happening, and refer to Appendix A for detailed descriptions and alternative action.

3.2 Summary Table of Challenges

Pillar	Common Challenge	Attentive Role
Imagination	CoP has become "one more thing" / Confusion of purposes	Integration
Identity	Division between core and spectators / Fragile onboarding	Facilitation
Relations	Lack of psychological safety / Silent disengagement	Facilitation / Integration
Movement	Documentation as a burden / Chaotic meetings	Documentation / Spaces

Source: own creation. The pillars of communities is the concept

Note: For details on each of the 16 mapped challenges, please refer to Appendix A at the end of this document.

PART 4: RITUALS AND PRACTICES — INSPIRATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

4.1 Understanding the 4 Phases of the Journey

Every community goes through natural cycles of maturation. Recognizing which phase you are in helps you adjust expectations.

Forming: Discovery phase and initial enthusiasm.

Storming: When differences appear and the rhythm weighs heavily.

Norming: When the group creates its own way of functioning.

Performing: When collaboration flows and results appear.

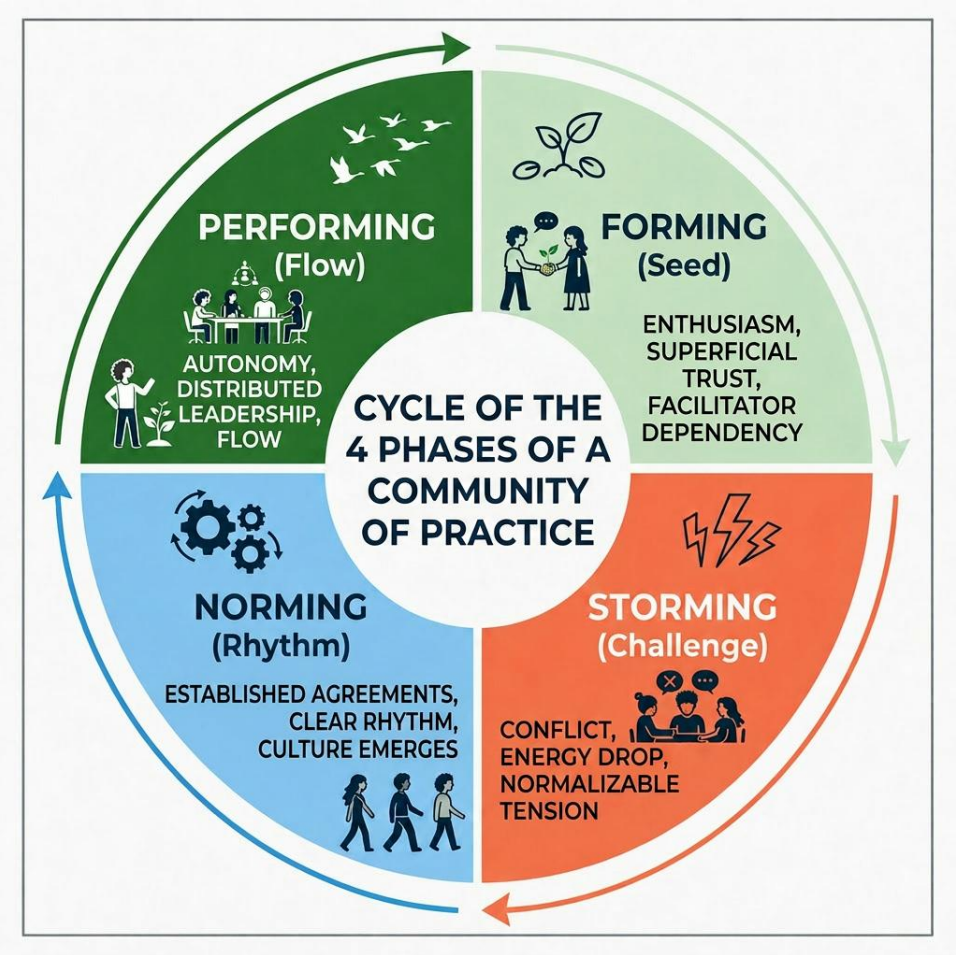

Diagram 2: 4 CoP Phase Cycle — Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing

4.2 Time Journey

CoP life unfolds in cycles. The first year is one of experimentation. Don't try to solve everything in the first month; Focus on establishing trust and bonds that allow collaborative work to emerge.

4.3 Experience Architecture (1:4:6)

To avoid the fatigue of meetings or frequent asynchronous work, you can choose to balance different types of meetings throughout the year. One way is the 1:4:6 Experience Architecture approach. It balances intensity and frequency, ensuring that the community remains alive without requiring constant and exhaustive presence. And once again, here we are systematizing some community management practices and options. The CoP has the autonomy and freedom to propose its governance system, meetings and decision-making.

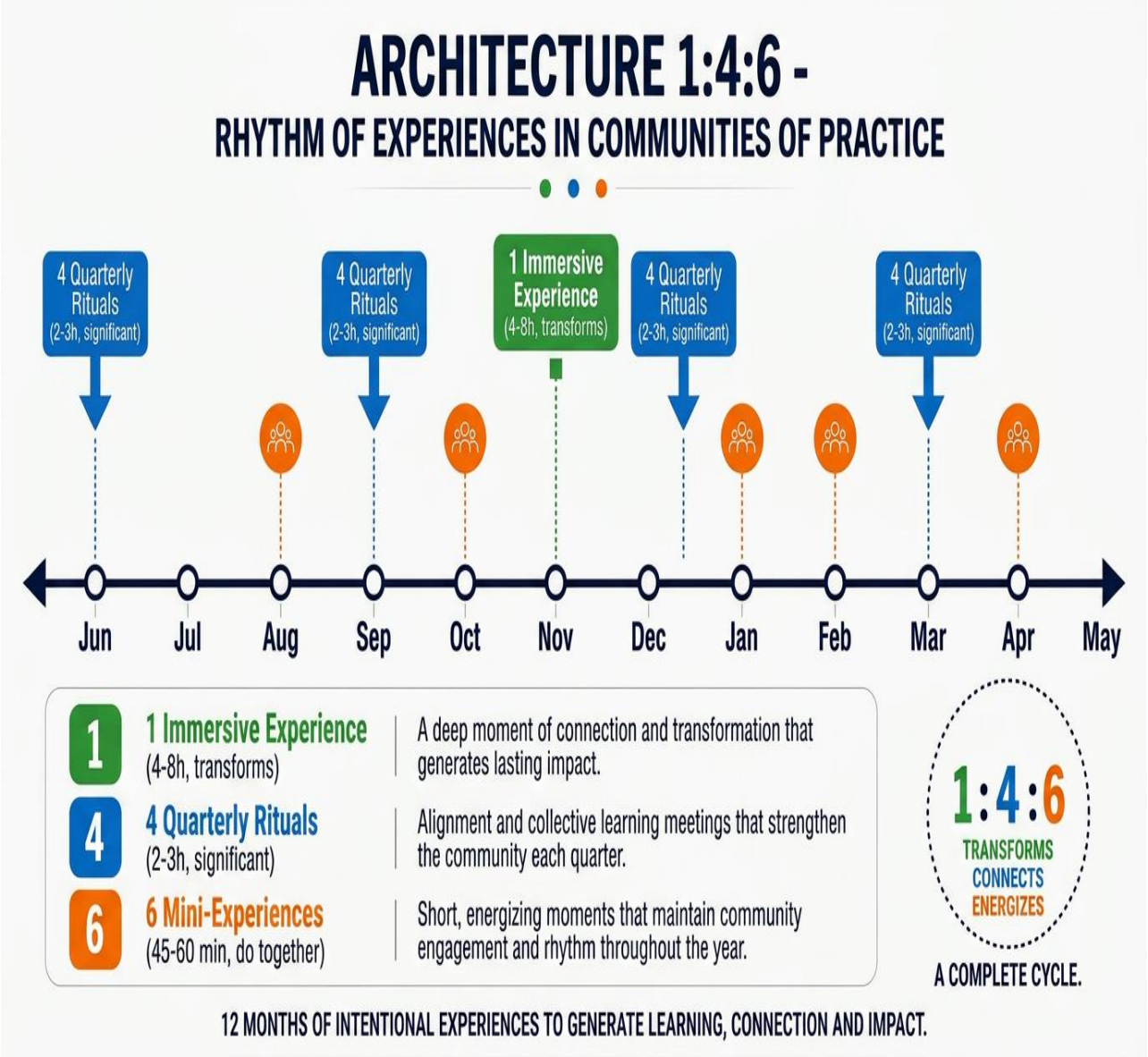

Diagram 3: 1:4:6 Architecture

1 - **Immersive Experience:** One deep encounter per year to connect and celebrate.

4 – **Station Meetings** (quarterly rituals): Quarterly reviews of purpose, governance and the paths taken.

6 - **Practice Cycles (mini-experiences):** Blocks of focused work and continuous learning.

4.4 Passing of the Baton

Role rotation is healthy. We recommend the use of transition pairs, where those who leave accompany those who enter for a short period, ensuring that the memory is not lost.

PART 5: OPERATIONAL SUPPORT – PRACTICAL TIPS

5.1 Time Frames and Maturity

You might consider looking at these milestones as health benchmarks for your CoP:

- **Month 1:** Focus on role clarity and creating psychological safety.
- **Month 3**: Common moment of emergence of tensions; One option is to perform the first review on purpose.
- **Month 6:** Rhythm stabilization; it is possible to assess whether new roles (such as Product Manager) are needed.
- **Month 12:** Renewal cycle; celebration of lessons learned and decision on the continuity of the CoP.

5.2 Suggested operational path of the CoP

Step 1 – Define objectives and scope (ideally to be completed during the IKI Annual Meeting)

- Define: purpose of the CoP, priority themes, value or expected expectation for participants and for the IKI network in Brazil.
- Identify basic indicators (e.g., regularity of meetings, number of contributions, knowledge products generated).
- Align with the CoP coordination the way of working and expectations. This can also be done after the IKI Annual Meeting.

Step 2 – Agree on the model of encounter and collaboration

- Suggested frequency: for example monthly or bimonthly; Duration 60–90 min.
- Format: virtual platform, with space for shared files and notes.
- Rules of operation: voluntary participation, practical focus, succinct registration, transparent decisions.

Step 3 – Present the 4 (or 5) roles (suggested) within the community

- Choose someone with an interest in the topic, availability, and light facilitation skills.
- Confirm allotted time (e.g., 1–3 h/month) and expected results.

Step 4 – Conducting the first 3 meetings of a CoP [here, it's just a practical example]

- Meeting 1: present objectives, map interests and practical cases; Co-define theme backlog.
- Meeting 2: deepen 1–2 cases, document learnings and good practices.
- Meeting 3: Review "what worked", adjust format, confirm next steps and assignees.

Step 5 – Ongoing curation and visibility

- Organize materials (templates, guides, case studies) in the channel/team.
- Make the work visible: short post-meeting summaries (max. 10 lines) and a simple table of to-dos/contributions, and tasks if agreed upon at the meeting.
- Invite relevant practitioners as the themes evolve.

Step 6 – Quarterly review with the coordination of the CoP

- Check: perceived value of the Community, participation, products generated (e.g., checklists, technical notes).
- Decide on settings: frequency, format, roles, tools.
- Identify needs for additional support (facilitation, training, connections).

Possible outcomes to explore (some practical examples)

- A living agenda of prioritized themes.
- Simple repository of good practices and lessons learned, products.
- Perceived improvement in solving day-to-day problems.
- Connections between implementing projects/organizations with a value generated for them.

Possible Indicators as points of attention (minimum)

- 3–6 meetings/semester with a quorum defined by the community.
- 2 to 4 products that the community finds useful, distributed throughout the year (e.g. checklist, templates, guides, technical note).
- Participant satisfaction (e.g., short pulse at the end of each cycle)

Examples and templates (optional):

- Agenda template (60–90 min) with blocks: opening, case 1, case 2, discussion of cases and synthesis, next steps.
- Post-meeting summary template (objective, key insights, decisions, pending issues, materials).

5.2 Communication Channels

There is no perfect channel, but rather the one that works for your group. Here are some configurations:

- **Synchronous (Meetings):** Reserved for complex decisions, link building, and deep learning sessions.
- **Asynchronous (Slack/WhatsApp/ReDUS):** Useful for quick warnings, link sharing, and tactical coordination. One suggestion is to avoid controversial discussions by text. But themes that emerge there and that are identified as central become the agenda of the meetings.
- **Repository (Notion/Drive/ReDUS):** Where the "truth" of the CoP lives. Final documents, decision minutes and products should be here in an organized way.

INTEGRITY OF CARE – TRANSVERSAL PRINCIPLE

Integrity of care means that the success of a CoP is not only measured by what it delivers, but by how people feel at the end of the process. If the delivery is excellent, but the group is exhausted and fragmented, governance has failed. When any process starts to turn into a burden, the CoP has the permission — and the responsibility — to pause and redesign it. The community is a living, breathing organism; Respecting your lungs is what ensures your longevity. Taking care of others also takes care of the longevity of the initiatives of the IKI Brazil network.

APPENDIX A: CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY (EXPANDED DESCRIPTION)

1. CoP has become "one more thing": Loss of enthusiasm. Alternative: Do a "reset" on purpose. **Role:** Integration

2. Confusion between purposes: Uncertainty whether it is to learn or execute. Alternative: Label meetings as "Work" or "Learning." **Role:** Integration.

3. Division between core and spectators: Few do everything. Alternative: Create rotating micro-tasks. **Role:** Facilitation.

4. Fragile onboarding: New members feel lost. Alternative: Designate a "sponsor" for the first month. **Role:** Integration.

5. Lack of psychological safety: Fear of making mistakes or disagreeing. Alternative: Practice vulnerability check-ins. **Role:** Facilitation.

6. Conflict avoided: Tensions "under the rug". Alternative: Use 1:1 mediation or Nonviolent Communication. **Role:** Facilitation.

7. Silent disengagement: People disappear without warning. Alternative: Empathetic listening conversations without charge. **Role:** Integration.

8. Silence in meetings: Lack of interaction. Alternative: Break into small discussion groups. **Role:** Spaces.

9. Documentation as a burden: Nobody wants to register. Alternative: Use mind maps or short audio recordings. **Role:** Documentation.

10. Chaotic meetings: No focus or decision. Alternative: Set session objective in the first 2 minutes. **Role:** Facilitation.

11. Lack of recreational meetings: We only talk about work. Alternative: Schedule "coffee without an agenda". **Role:** Spaces.

12. Difficulty in asynchronous: Information is lost. Alternative: Create a simple weekly newsletter. **Role:** Spaces.

13. Role overload: One person does everything. Alternative: Structured pause for redistribution. **Role:** Facilitation.

14. Difficulty in passing the baton: Fear of the CoP ending. Alternative: Create a "living manual" of the role. **Role:** All.

15. Collective memory loss: Repetition of mistakes. Alternative: Create a simple index of past decisions. **Role:** Documentation.

16. Stagnation after the 6th month: The novelty has passed. Alternative: Bring an outside guest for a new perspective. **Role:** Integration.

ANNEX B: PHASES OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Phase	Metaphor	Duration	Main Focus
Germination	Seed	0-1 month	Clarity of purpose and initial connection
Inspiration	Sprouting	1-3 months	Building trust and group standards
Growth	Plant	3-6 months	Clear structure and first results
Flowering	Flowers	6-12 months	Distributed leadership and external impact

Pollination	Seeds	12+ months	Natural evolution or legacy left

Source: Community of practice (CoP) - from own to shared knowledge. Document produced by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)[ii]. The table summarizes the phases of a community of practice in the first year. The model developed by SDC also includes the phase: Mission Accomplished (Mission Accomplished / Seeds), which was not included in this process of piloting a community of practice for 12 months.

[i] Design of Connections by the Amuta Institute is an approach to Design applied to human relations. It conceives 5 pillars: imagination, identity, experiences, movement and relationships for an intentional construction of relationships. Based on the 5 proposed pillars, Connection Design is used for the construction, evolution or nurturing of communities (Amuta Institute, Amuta Inventory 2025, 2026. https://www.institutoamuta.com.br/).

[ii] Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Community of Practice (CoP) – from own to shared knowledge. Practical material developed by SDC with indications to start a CoP, the essential conditions of a CoP and its basic structure.