



Communities of Practice – Truths and Myths

A Transportation Librarian Round Table Facilitated Conversation

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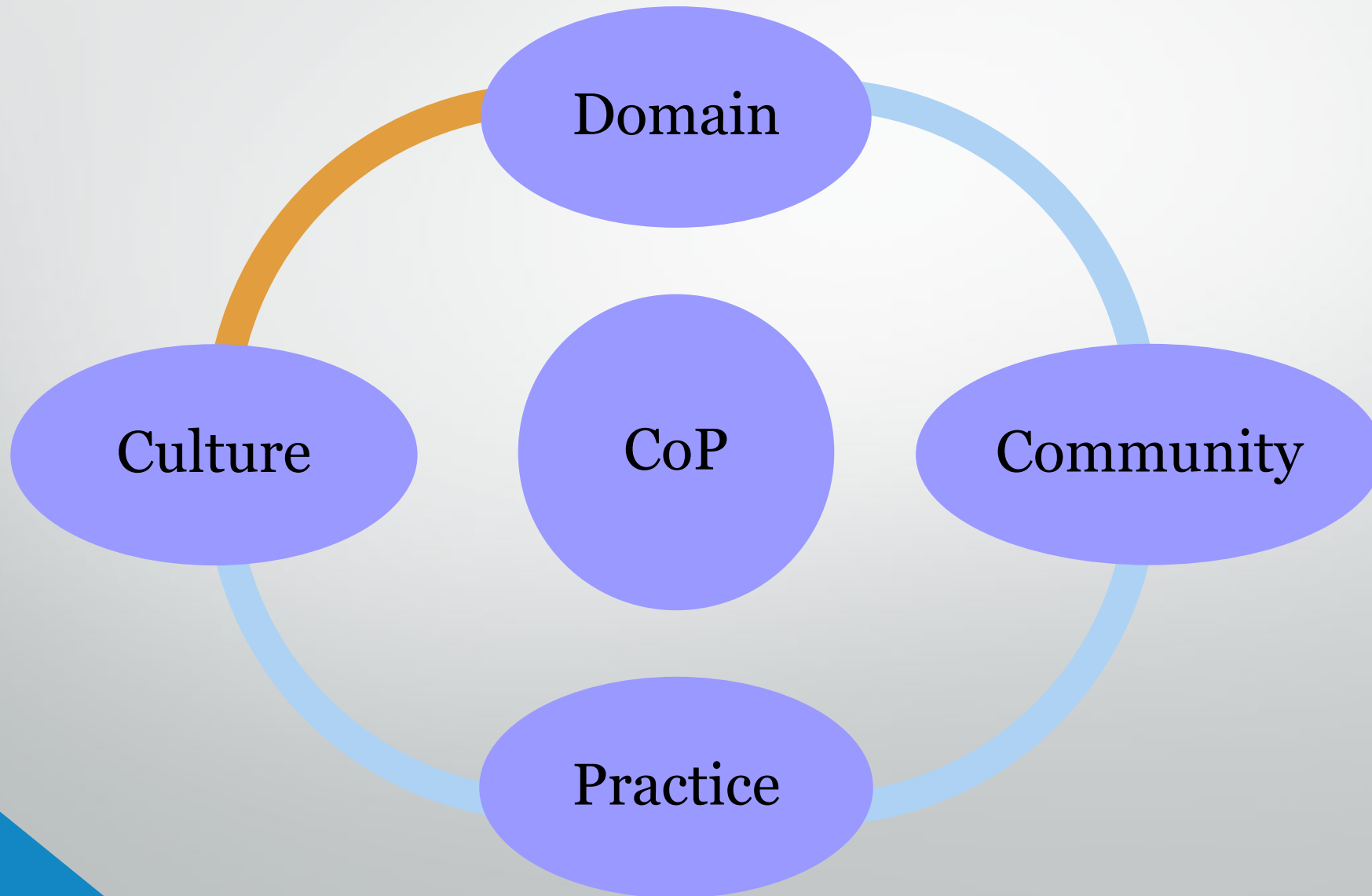
What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?

- Wenger defines a community of practice as: “Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their understanding and knowledge of this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.”
Wenger, Cultivating Communities of Practice, 2002.

Ten Common Myths about Communities of Practice (CoP)

- Any network or community can be a CoP...
- Every member of a CoP must be active all the time ...
- There is one preferred model for a CoP ...
- CoPs are expected to live forever ...
- CoPs must retain all their members for the full life cycle ...
- The most important CoPs are work related, in a business unit or team ...
- CoPs must be launched and acknowledged by the organization ...
- Managers and the organization define a CoPs goals ...
- CoPs developed recently as a result of technology and social media ...
- Have key members who teach others what they know ...

Essential Components of a CoP



CoP stages of development

COMMITTING

Someone decides a CoP would be a good thing to do and sets out to do it.

STARTING UP

The CoP purpose is framed, members are selected or recruited, and roles are negotiated.

OPERATING

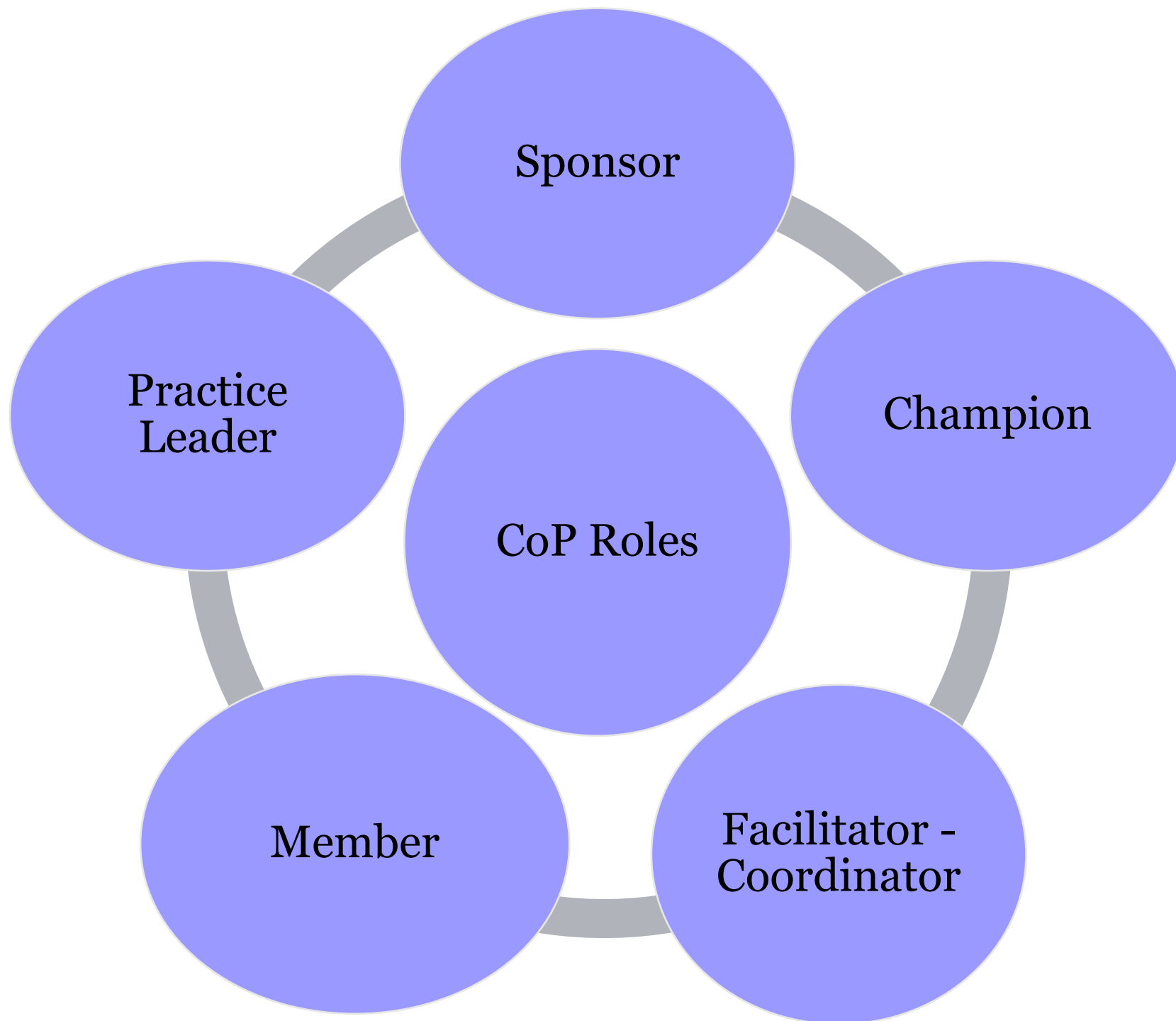
The CoP members share knowledge, solve problems, build skills, and improve their practice.

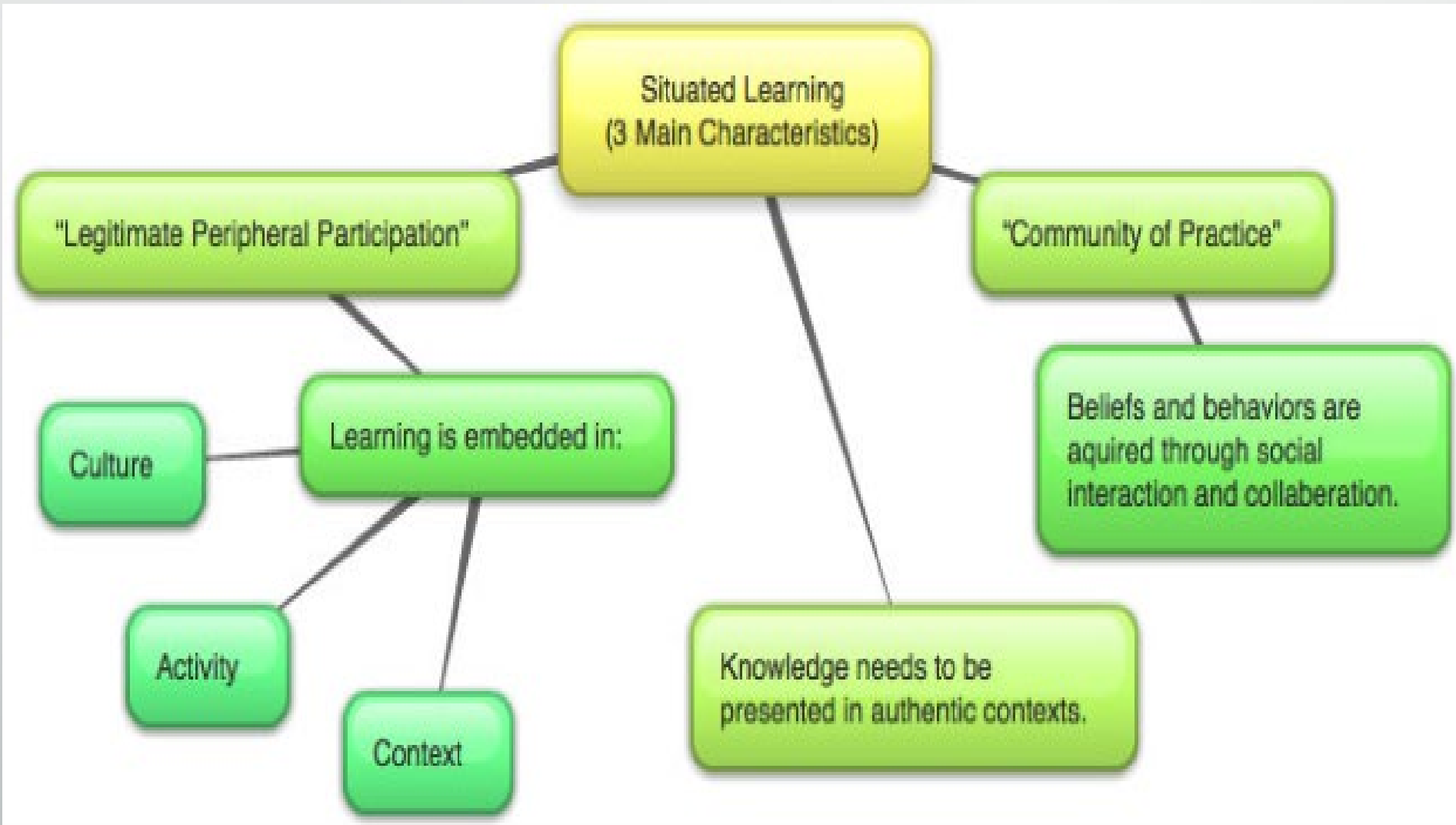
WINDING DOWN

The value of membership and the value to the organization diminish over time as problems are solved and the practice improves.

SHUTTING DOWN

The purpose is fulfilled and little or no value remains; the members and/or the organization decide to shut down.





What is an Effective Community of Practice (CoP)?

- An effective Community of Practice is one that:
 - Achieves the goals set by the members of the CoP
 - Creates new knowledge
 - Provides a space where members learn, unlearn or relearn
 - Creates opportunities to build human, structural and relational capital where formal, organizational or other sources are not available
 - Develops new relationships or strengthens existing relationships
 - Builds trust among members



Sharing and Assessing Your CoPs

Questions for a Conversation

- What CoPs do you belong to?
- What is the common interest or problem of the CoP?
- Does the CoP create new knowledge?
- Does the CoP resolve problems or challenges?
- What is the current life cycle stage of these CoPs?
- What role do you play in each CoP?
- Are all the key roles found in each CoP?
- What have you learned or unlearned in a CoP?
- Are your CoPs informal, recognized and supported or structured?
- How would you describe the culture of each CoP?

Thank you!

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