



ON THINK TANKS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Terms of Reference August 2019

About OTT

On Think Tanks is a global collaboration of policy entrepreneurs driven by the conviction that better informed societies have a greater chance of delivering progress for their most vulnerable members. The members of the [On Think Tanks team](#) and its partners consider that policy research institutes, or think tanks, can play many important roles in supporting better informed societies. To us, this is our ultimate goal.

OBJECTIVES OF THE OTT COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (OTTCOPs)

Through the OTT Communities of Practice (OTTCOPs) OTT hope to facilitate discussions between members of the OTT community on issues of common interest with the aim of advancing our collective thinking on them, identifying common challenges and opportunities and co-developing lasting solutions.

The OTTCOPs are conceived as virtual spaces for their members to meet “in-between” and help design sessions at the OTT Conferences. We expect that they will become permanent spaces of deliberation and collaboration.

BENEFITS FOR ALL

By joining an OTTCOP you will help shape future thinking in the field of think tanks and evidence informed policy. The OTT Conferences are becoming an important feature in the annual calendar for think tanks and evidence informed policy researchers and practitioners. They offer an excellent opportunity to lift the level of the debate, inform micro and macro level decisions, and identify emerging issues. We hope the communities will provide a strong foundation to these discussions.

By convening or joining an OTTCOP you will also benefit from the contacts made with others involved in each and in the broader OTT community, you will benefit from OTT’s efforts to communicate the work of the OTTCOPs and their members through multiple channels, and you will receive an invitation to join the following OTT Conference (in Berlin in April 2020).

ROLES

To support each OTTCOP, OTT will provide the following:

- 1) Facilitation support – one member of the OTT team will join the communities to support the conveners.
- 2) A monthly (or bi-monthly, depending on the OTTCOP’s conveners) Zoom meeting space for unlimited discussions including group work. We will also record the sessions for future reference and, if the conveners so wish, to share publicly.
- 3) A shared Google Drive to save and share any relevant documents among the community members.
- 4) A section in the OTT Annual Review to publish an article about the OTTCOP’s thematic focus. The article for the 2019 Annual Review would feature the community’s starting ideas.
- 5) A space at the OTT Conference – a parallel session – for the OTTCOP to present and further the discussion.
- 6) Production of a “flagship” OTTCOP output that provides a summary of the key ideas developed by the community. This could be a long article, an OTT Series (a series of short articles or interviews), a Best Practice document, a Working Paper, a report, a video (recorded during the next OTT Conference), a webinar or some other proposed by the conveners.
- 7) A page on the OTT website, including a brief on the OTTCOP’s focus, a brief profile of its members and links to any outputs produced by them.
- 8) Proactive dissemination of any of the outputs of the group via OTT’s communication channels.

- 9) A stipend of USD1,000 for the conveners to cover basic facilitation costs and/or travel support to key members of the OTTCOP (including themselves) to attend the OTT Conference in 2020.

OTTCOPs would:

- 1) Be led by one or two conveners who will be responsible for facilitating the community and for providing OTT with the necessary information to keep the OTTCOP's page up to date.
- 2) Meet regularly (every month or every two months, at most) using the Zoom meeting space provided, establish any other preferred way of communicating between Zoom meetings and save any relevant documents in the shared Google Drive provided.
- 3) Produce a short article (about 800) words to publish in [OTTs Annual Review](#). The article should outline one or two key ideas that the community is discussing or working on.
- 4) Organise a parallel session at the following OTT Conference (Berlin, April 2020).
- 5) Produce a "flagship" output with OTT's support. The "flagship" output should summarise the key findings or results of the community's work since its launch until after the OTT Conference. The "flagship" output could be a long article, a series of articles written by various members of the community, a webinar scheduled for May (one month after the OTT Conference), a video (recorded during the OTT Conference), etc. The conveners of the OTTCOP are expected to provide all the content and OTT will take care of any design, layout, filming and editing, etc.
- 6) Actively share any outputs of the group via the members' own communication channels.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to anyone interested and willing to convene and/or engage. However, we will give priority to communities of practice that strive to be inclusive in terms of gender and global representation.

This invitation to convene an OTTCOP is directed at individuals who have been part of past OTT Conferences, are OTT Fellows and alumni of our various learning opportunities or are part of the OTT Team of associates. Conveners are encouraged to invite members working primarily in think tanks and the broader evidence informed policymaking community.

Members should commit to a minimum of active participation. We do not foresee OTTCOPs having more than 10 members in total.

COLLABORATIONS

We are particularly interested in communities of practice which can be convened in collaboration with other institutions and would therefore favour the opportunity to co-finance and co-brand them.

PRIORITY OTTCOPS: 2019-2020

For the 2019-2020 period we are prioritising the following themes or issues to support on the basis of the sessions at the 2019 OTT Conference. We will be able to support 5 of these communities, as a pilot (but we welcome other suggestions for others):

- Evidence informed policy – how to foster a demand for evidence?
- Think tanks in captured states – what can think tanks do?
- Diversity in think tanks – beyond gender balance, how can think tanks and their work be truly inclusive?
- The future of public engagement – how to reach out to new publics who demand a greater say in what is studied, how it is studied and how it is communicated?
- New technologies and think tanks - opportunities and threats for the old and the new?
- Business models for sustainable think tanks
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning

KEY DATES FOR OTTCOPs: 2019-2020

For the 2019-2020 cycle we ask the conveners of OTTCOPs to consider the following key dates:

- September – October 2019: Launch of the OTTCOPs – hold a first Zoom meeting in October 2019 (early); Information for OTT website – provide all basic information about the OTTCOP, including a calendar of Zoom meetings.
- November 2019 (late): OTT 2019 Annual Review – submit of article for the Annual Review
- February 2020 (late): OTT 2020 Conference in Berlin – submit outline of parallel session
- April 2020 (first week): OTT 2020 Conference in Berlin – convene parallel session
- May 2020: Publish “flagship” output

APPLICATION TO CONVENE A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

If you would like to **convene** an OTTCOP please email Enrique Mendizabal: enrique@onthinktanks.org with the following information by August 31st (first deadline) and September 30th (second deadline):

- Topic of the OTTCOP:
- What are the key questions or objectives that the OTTCOP’s wish to address?:
- Names, gender, affiliations and emails of the conveners (if this applies):
- If this will this OTTCOP be a collaboration with another institution please,
 - Name of partner institution:
 - Contribution of partner institution:
- Names and affiliations of possible members of the OTTCOP:
- A brief proposed plan of activities between September/October 2019 and May 2020 (including follow-up activities after the OTT 2020 Conference):
- Proposed “flagship” output (which can be reviewed later):
- A proposal of how the USD1,000 contribution will be used:

We will review applications after each deadline and announce the selection of the conveners soon after to encourage those interested to join as members to do so.