



Call: ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PI-ALL-INNO-EDU-ENTERP — ALLIANCES FOR INNOVATION – LOT 1



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

COP	Creating Commons
EU	European Commission
ICOP	International Communities of Practice
HL	Healthy Living
HE	Higher Education
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
SIE	Social Innovation Ecosystem
SIEHL	Social Innovation Ecosystem for Healthy Living
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the NEST Capacity Building Framework for ICOP Change Agents and Change Mentors. This guide is designed to support building capacity to prepare, establish, and facilitate International Communities of Practices within the NEST European Innovation Alliance for Healthy Living. The document is divided into three main sections: PART (A) Reflections towards our NEST ICOP capacity-building context and principles, PART (B) Guidelines towards training NEST ICOP Facilitators, and PART (C) Guidelines towards empowering NEST ICOP Mentors. The framework is meant to be a practical guide for implementation that needs to be read together with our NEST Frame of Reference and the NEST ICOP Implementation Manual. It is also important to understand that the document must be read as an intermediate product that in the end leads the way towards a consolidated, structural framework for framing, governing, and facilitating Local Social Innovation Ecosystems for Healthy Living (SIEHL). This final capacity-building framework will be published around summer 2026.

## PART A – CAPACITY-BUILDING CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES

### A.1 Capacity-Building and Learning Context

**THE BIGGER SOCIETAL PICTURE I** Due to increasing globalization, technological advances and sociological changes, our world has become more complex than ever. Complexity has gone from large systems to organizational and individual levels, and today it concerns all aspects of society. The will to take up these complex global challenges from a sense of agency requires a mind-shift across individual to organisational levels, and it must be accompanied by fundamental systemic changes in societal regimes that are conceptualised in sustainability transition. This includes the global challenge to transform towards a more inclusive, healthy and happy society.

**A CALL FOR TRANSITION AND SOCIAL CHANGE I** The large-scale and complex challenge of a healthy society calls for multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approaches that go together with – or that are even driven by – social innovation. In doing so, we shall acquire insights on how to develop and apply new approaches, methodologies, technologies and structures that nurture the envisaged social change at local levels.

This means that in our context social change determines the learning pathway towards tackling the complex challenge of a healthier society. It refers to mid- to long-term developments in society at large that are mostly accompanied by disruption, aiming at more citizens enjoying a healthier life across different life situations, but also their social environment holding (greater) capacity to enable and value healthy living.

**BREAKING UP SILOED THINKING I** The fields covering healthy living are manifold and vastly fragmented. It means that health interventions are still developed and implemented independently throughout health disciplines and professions, or they are seen without the wider context. With it, we are still largely denying other social and economic aspects of

life and all the interactions in between contributing to balanced and healthy living. This counteracts impact, sustainability, and exploitation. This is also because traditional health care approaches are often limited by their scope. Yet, the siloed thinking and acting in the health sector must be opened. Because a more efficient and effective approach to healthy living is based on the premise that an individual's behaviour is shaped by a dynamic interaction with their environments. This includes influences on the interpersonal, organizational, policy, and community levels.

**NURTURING SOCIAL INNOVATION I** In this context, social innovation is the process of commonly developing and deploying novel ideas and effective solutions to circumstances that challenge healthy living at community level. This includes out-of-the-box-thinking to identify and meet social needs, create new social relationships and implement co-creation that favour healthy living. Social innovations in this sense are intended changes in the framework of local community ecosystems that imply an improvement as regards healthy living. Such social innovations can be new projects, products, services, programmes, or models addressing health related barriers for the members of a local community or increasing their ability to cope with corresponding challenges in the local community.

**THE NECESSITY FOR MULTILAYER COLLABORATION ECOSYSTEMS I** Achieving our aims requires close and aligned collaboration across sectors and fields at multiple layers. This involves co-creating applicable sets of closely intertwined interventions and systems. For it, we propose exploiting a local social innovation ecosystem approach in which various stakeholders across sectors are closely contributing to healthy living by collaborating through participatory multi-actor approaches. Such innovation ecosystems must have an emphasize on cocreation at eye-level that is driven by collective agenda setting, collective ownership, and an active involvement of the end users in all phases of the social innovation process.

**A CALL FOR FOSTERING FUTURE SKILLS I** When talking about driving such transitions and social change, it becomes obvious that it must be skills-led. This impacts the full ecosystem of society and requires a reskilling of the workforce. In this regard, mainly skills towards digital literacy that includes artificial intelligence (AI) proficiency, and skills supporting transition towards greener economies and environmental sustainability are said to be key. Yet, it is our believe that it includes skills for readying towards learning in complexity. Skills related to navigating complexity are essential for dealing with dynamic, unpredictable, and interconnected environments. They help individuals and teams make sense of uncertain situations and to adapt effectively to complex challenges.

**MAPPING RELEVANT SKILLS TO NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY I** For mapping skills towards learning in complexity, both the Cynefin and VUCA frameworks provide good starting points. The Cynefin framework categorizes situations into the domains Clear, Complicated, Complex, Chaotic, and Confused or Apex. With it, the framework spans from known cause-effects or rich practices to cause-effects that require analysis or expertise, to rather unclear cause-effects with patterns emerging over time, to no apparent patterns where immediate action



is needed, and to unclear domains. With it, the Cynefin framework calls for skills ranging from procedural learning to systems mapping, to sensemaking and experimentation, to action-oriented responses, and to reframing. VUCA stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. It means that the framework spans from unstable change that is not necessarily difficult to understand, to a lack of predictability or unknown outcomes, to unforeseen interconnected variables, and to lack of clarity about meaning or causality. This requires skills ranging from agility and resilience, to prototyping, to systems thinking and cross-disciplinary collaboration, to sensemaking and adaptive mindsets.

**THE NECESSITY OF A LEADING ROLE OF EDUCATION I** The potential for education providers across levels to become a key driver in this transformation and skills-development is huge. And we even claim that education must and can play a lead role in this. This is because the shift towards co-creation in health prevention with impact driven structures demands knowledge and professionals who are educated to shine in complexity and guide social innovation processes. But, although single strategies for education and implementation are independently developed, there exists lack of co-creating innovative solutions and bridging the gap between knowledge and practice when it comes to stimulating healthy living, especially when it comes to the local context. This urges education institutes to better exploit the non-linear innovation model of the Quintuple Helix that combines knowledge, know-how, and the healthy living environments and systems together into one interdisciplinary framework. This leads to shared agenda setting towards socio-ecological transition in the field.

**THE IDEA OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE I** Considering the above, multilevel intervention strategies at the micro, meso, and macro levels must be applied to allow for sustainable, socio-economic health impact. Innovation towards healthy living demands co-learning and co-creation in an ecosystem that is sustainable and that engages the full variety of public and private stakeholders across disciplines, which includes education institutes, businesses, and the citizens. In this regard, we have experienced that communities of practice (COP) are one valuable enabler and accelerator to facilitate and drive social innovation. Its members interact regularly to learn and to co-create innovative solutions. For it, a COP is determined by an active and open learning environment that allows for eye-level exchange and participatory approaches. It leads to action towards social innovation that is openly shared and can be applied in practice. And it means that a COP also becomes an instrument for education to anticipate contemporary challenges and gives a structure for lifelong learning. In our context, we have established four international communities of practice that support a framework for the creation of new knowledge in the thematic fields of (a) Sustainable Governance and Financing, (b) Engaged Community Stakeholders, (c) Reflexive Monitoring, and (d) Knowledge Creation. Their aim is to become valuable enablers for co-learning and accelerators for innovative solutions at community level.

**THE NECESSITY FOR LOCAL APPLICABILITY I** As a process, social innovation guides the co-creation and co-learning activities in our four thematic international communities of

practice. Yet, they do not determine our ultimate impact ecosystem. Rather they support creating a learning pathway towards exploring answers to learning questions that are in common across social innovation ecosystems for healthy living (SIEHL) at community level – where the “magic” ultimately happens. This consciously chosen working framework allows for an iterative process of learning, implementing, and developing in parallel, and therefore, it determines one of the strengths of our concept. It allows for constant reflection and validation processes across sectors, between ICOPs, plus across and between SIEHL.

**FACILITATING INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE I** To guide the learning pathway and social innovation processes and to take advantage of the full potential of our ICOP approach, we exploit the concept of change agencies. In this context, change agencies determine a team of facilitators that are persons who are skilled to establish, facilitate and sustain change processes through communities of practice that lead to new solutions. Whereby our ICOP facilitators both have a focus on their thematic field, for example reflexive monitoring, the wicked challenge of healthy living, and the local context in which potential solutions are applied in by a SIEHL. Plus, they need to have the skills to create a functioning and sustainable social innovation ecosystem and change processes through the communities of practice approach, and to encourage people to engage in successful change assignments that lead to local impact. And as there is a great range of roles to take for ICOP facilitators, we like to refer to what we call change agencies, which may be described as a complementary team of facilitators of different roles.

## A.2 Capacity-Building and Learning Approach

**THE NECESSITY FOR LEARNING IN COMPLEXITY I** Taking care of a healthy society and living a healthy life necessitates the acknowledgement of the dynamics and interweaving of several factors that can be described as what we call a complex system. In such phenomena, which can be best grasped by comparing to the situation when raising a child, our learning outcomes cannot be fully pre-defined from the very beginning. Rather, the steps to follow in our learning pathway are situative, they may be negotiated, and they follow non-linear patterns. Simply said: context matters. This precondition requires us to think and work consistently from a complex ontology which we define as a complexity-orientated approach. We need to rethink what we learn and how we learn to tackle the grand societal challenge of a healthy society and to build the future we want. In this perspective, new forms of combined complexity-based learning approaches need to be implemented to allow for social change through social innovation.

**DEFINING A COMPLEXITY-ORIENTED LEARNING APPROACH I** Learning in complexity is then a critical pedagogical approach on navigating and influencing healthy living in real life situations. It anticipates the dynamic and constantly emerging set of processes and objects that not only interact with each other but that come to be defined by those interactions. Our learners then co-create, experiment and engage in an ICOP landscape that is built for



a long-term mission orientation so that they can positively influence with their knowledge and tools the challenges tackled by the SIEHL at community level.

**NURTURING A COMPLEXITY-ORIENTED LEARNING APPROACH I** Our capacity building and learning approach is then anchored in the anticipation for the future and the development of the right mindset(s) and skills to resolve this complex challenge of a healthy society. Accepting this underlying logic of complexity offers us an opportunity to think beyond linear causal problem solving. Yet, the challenge is to integrate learning in complexity with its underlying logic across our different learning and co-creation approaches. Therefore, we need to nurture an active and open facilitator capacity-building environment imparted under the same learning and co-creation principles as stipulated for our local social innovation ecosystems or our international communities of practice respectively. It demands to be rooted in a complexity-oriented learning and capacity-building philosophy alongside constructivist learning theories that emphasize the learners' critical role in constructing meaning from new information and prior experience. With it, our facilitators are empowered towards the anticipation of complexity, and thus they are embracing non-linear causality and the emergent and dynamic characteristics of complex issues. With it, we clearly differ from the way we traditionally learn.

**OUR CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING PRINCIPLES I** A main principle in our training approach is to accept that the facilitators, the participating ICOP members, and the learners in the SIEHL, need to think *with* the complexity and not to work against it; nor trying to break it down into rather complicated or simpler problems. Our facilitators need to accept that knowledge is not static, often not even objective, and that it cannot be fully planned or even controlled. In complexity, knowledge is often rather short lived and for sure dependent on the dynamics in the (wider) system and/or the specific (local) context. In addition, this way of learning combines both individual and collective learning pathways, which over again influence each other. These aspects are often uncomfortable. Both our capacity-building approaches and the learning within therefore demand constant reflexive monitoring and an evaluative attitude towards what we consider knowledge of the situation.

**A CALL FOR READYING TOWARDS LEARNING IN COMPLEXITY I** Our capacity-building approach feels even more uncomfortable because we can't force our own version of what we consider *the* knowledge or solution we „should” bring onto the people in the local SIEHL or those driving the health systems. Instead, we constantly have to take into account the complex contexts with their specific structures, experiences, or relationships, and how everything works together. However, taking such more humble approach helps us understand, appreciate, and respect the richness of our interconnected world and new pathways towards healthy living. In it, the hardest part is letting go of the illusion that we can fully plan, control, or even dominate the future developments. This leads us to the question of how we should prepare ourselves to valuably facilitate the knowledge creation in and through our ICOP structures. For us, it calls for a constant process of individual and collective *readying* in the transition towards health. It means that we as individuals and in

the interaction with each other need to open up to support creating conditions for new and rather unforeseen opportunities. We need to leave our pre-defined pathways. This requires sensing and sensemaking new information, as well as holding it for others so that it can be valuable in the collective learning processes. This calls for ongoingly building trust and fostering a collective learning and acting agenda.

**THE NECESSITY FOR KEM I** Facilitating international communities of practice requires collaboration across disciplines, along with specific skills. To guide the development of social change we can rely on a set of structured approaches known as Key Enabling Methodologies (KEM). Like key technologies, they are essential tools that support changemakers in organizing, solving problems, and creating impact. KEM help combine insights from social sciences and humanities with technological possibilities. They enable the creation of meaningful interventions by addressing questions like: How can social theories inform practical solutions? How can interventions shift behaviours or systems? Or how can we move toward the change we want to see?

**OUR CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING APPROACH I** Based on the above considerations, our ICOP facilitator training approach exploits a flexible but interconnected learning, mentoring, and experiencing systematic to reach our superior capacity building goals. With it, the programme is adaptable in its implementation approach and can be tailored towards specific context in practice and individual learning needs. This alternative design for individual and collective capacity building provides the advantage to design a facilitator programme that is highly learner-centred and reflective. It ensures that the learning is context-oriented and yields at relevant, innovative, and implementable solutions rooted in practice and adapted to the local social innovation context.

Our capacity-building imparts down-to-earth content and practical instruments that can be applied straight away. It includes inspiring rich practices of different background and context, together with mentoring opportunities with experienced facilitators to help learners to understand how to apply the theory towards impact in practice. And most importantly, it allows for reciprocative learning opportunities inside the ICOP, across the four NEST ICOPs, with local SIEHL and across the five local NEST SIEHL.

With it, our learner-centred educational mindset shifts the focus of instruction from the trainer to the learner. It recognizes individual differences in learners, and it emphasizes individual learners' interests, abilities, and learning styles. The approach places our trainers in the position of flexible facilitators of learning for individuals rather than imposing a rigid training programme for an entire group. Therefore, our below learning units are not rigidly declined as this would rather constrain our learning approach. With it, our programme connects theory and practice by providing a practice-based professional learning environment in which our facilitators share, learn from, and reflect on their and others' experiences, rather than merely relying on a formal knowledge transfer. It develops openness, autonomy, and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of learners.

This also means that the learning objectives cannot be fully pre-defined, and by far not for each of the learners equally. They are to impart to the learners' knowledge, skills, and learning experiences that are existing or needed to be required to establish and facilitate their international communities of practice. Above all, they shall empower them towards problem-solving and to support them on their individual and collective learning pathway to measure up to the specific requirement of the complexity they face from and in practice.

## PART B – ICOP FACILITATOR TRAINING GUIDELINES

TRAINING	NEST ICOP FACILITATOR
<p>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</p>	<p>The training aims to build the required capacities to create a clearer sense of purpose and vision for taking a facilitation role towards navigating transitions through international communities of practice in the scope of the NEST European Innovation Alliance for Healthy Living. With it, participants will develop an understanding of the context, perspectives, systems, processes and supporting instruments for empowering learning and co-creation towards transition for a healthy society. The training does not constitute an initial education but seeks to build on prior knowledge and experience. It can be taught as a standalone capacity-building, or it can be adapted and linked or integrated into existing learning offers. If integrated into existing learning programmes, the adapted course shall be contextualized within the actual context and realities of the participants. In this regard, this training guideline rather serves as a knowledge bank from which educational designers may choose and build an aligned and complementary learning offer that is tailored towards their respective learners' context and development needs.</p>
<p>TARGET GROUP</p>	<p>The target group of the training are (future) professionals seeking to take empowerment roles in NEST ICOP structures. This may include (future) leaders from education institutes, non-governmental organisations, governmental institutions, or businesses, or those in education. Course participants usually have undergone prior education, and they shall hold practical work experience. Prior leadership expertise is not required. A main goal of the course is to gather a diverse team of learners across professions and disciplines, with diverse institutional and practical backgrounds represented. The course is based on the condition that the participants work or will work (together) in an international community of practice aimed at supporting local social innovation ecosystems in the field of healthy living. It means that our learners, ideally, already form part of a community of practice or a social innovation ecosystem, or they support to establish one. Because both the international community of practice and the local social innovation ecosystems will serve as our training's learning in complexity environment that supports our learners to emerge in practice and to directly facilitate innovation for practice. In addition, the participants should be open to learn at eye-level in a mutually supportive learning environment, and they should have a genuine desire for co-learning from and co-creating new knowledge with others.</p>

## SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Analysing current societal developments and challenges – in the past, present, and future – and other societal actors. Building analytical capacity for transitions related to healthy living.
- Empowering, which includes creating an environment within other persons can grow and learn and feel comfortable and enabled to take initiative, responsibility, and decisions.
- Collective agenda-setting, which includes broadening the discursive and actor network underpinning a common direction.
- Activating and engaging which includes putting the shared direction into action through setting up initiatives and projects and learning from them.
- Reflecting, which includes fostering a culture of reflexivity and learning within the community.
- Learning-by-doing and doing-by-learning, learning from others, and from one's own experiments.

## LEARNING UNITS

1

### Laying the Foundation - An Introduction to Concepts, Principles and Approaches

- ⇒ Exploring concepts, theories, and approaches as regards complexity, social change and facilitating transitions
- ⇒ Contextualizing and transferring theories into facilitation practice

LEARNING UNITS	2	<p>Framing Applicable ICOP Ecosystems: From Self-Insight to Building Supportive Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Understanding the concept, necessity, and principles of social innovation ecosystems</li> <li>⇒ Co-creating and facilitating applicable social innovation ecosystems</li> <li>⇒ Understanding the collective learning journey and engaging stakeholders</li> <li>⇒ Exploiting appreciative leadership and the principles of playfulness</li> </ul>	
	3	<p>The Value and Applicability of Collaboration and Co-creation Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ The necessity of Co-creation between ICOPs</li> <li>⇒ The necessity of Reciprocated learning between ICOP and SIEHL</li> <li>⇒ The opportunity for Cross- and Transdisciplinary Research</li> <li>⇒ The concept of an Embedded Action Researcher</li> </ul>	
	4	<p>Sensing Applicable Facilitation Approaches and Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Concepts, roles, and tools of change agencies</li> <li>⇒ Selecting, applying and experiencing a facilitator's toolbox</li> </ul>	
	5	<p>About Engaging, Communicating and Pitching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Articulating Learning Questions</li> <li>⇒ Identifying and Engaging Stakeholders</li> <li>⇒ Communicating your Vision, Mission and Goals</li> <li>⇒ Pitching your ICOP Value</li> </ul>	
	6	<p>Experiencing Reflexive Monitoring and Developmental Evaluation Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Evaluating a SIEHL's learning journey</li> <li>⇒ Evaluating an ICOP's learning journey</li> <li>⇒ Experiencing collective learning processes in day-to-day-practice</li> </ul>	
LEARNING PRINCIPLES	<p>When learning in complexity towards taking a role to facilitate sustainability transitions and social impact, our learners undergo individual learning processes that are highly contextual. Plus, they facilitate collective learning processes inside and outside their social innovation ecosystems and specific contexts. The competences related to ICOP facilitation are therefore a mix of dispositions, understandings, attributes, and practices that are typically non-determinate. This is because it is seldom possible to specify fully what it would mean to be competent. This means that learning outcomes are difficult to be pre-defined but rather ask for evaluative judgement through observation and interpretation. They take time to form. Any descriptions of performance would include descriptions of the context. Because to understand the meaning of careful descriptions and judgements of performance we need to understand, criteria and the conditions under which the performance was achieved. It means that rather than pre-defining learning objectives next to definite activities and fixed assessment principles towards static goals, our training defines rather open principles and activities that are contextual and related to individual and collective learning goals. It is therefore up to the individual</p>		

	<p>course designers and educators to contextualize and commonly define learning goals, activities, and performative indicators, plus the way to evaluate them, at its best together with the learner.</p>
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POSSIBLE LEARNING GOALS	Participants will ...
	A Be able to comprehend complexity and embrace uncertainty
	B Be aware of the basic concepts related to transitions and how they relate to local context and practice
	C Experience the necessity of a constant reading and reflection process, both at an individual and collective level
	D Be able to apply appreciative facilitation, co-learning and co-creation principles
	E Understand the necessity and know the principles of building supportive innovation environments
	F Be able to co-create and facilitate applicable Social Innovation Environments
	G Be able to apply the concept of change agencies
	H Become more resilient to bounce back from failure
	I Experience the power of learning in complexity and co-creation in practice
	J Understand the necessity of contextualising different knowledges towards local contexts
	K Understand why facilitating transitions differ from managing change or creating replicable expert advice

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING	<p>Our training implements an assessment for learning instead of an assessment of learning that is also grounded in our NEST reflexive monitoring approaches and a developmental evaluation culture. It means that any evaluation strategies promote both individual and collective learning alongside an active engagement of the learners. To systematically organize the collective learning process, a direct link to evaluation and reflection is desirable. Regular joint evaluation can be linked to both an individual and collective learning agenda so that a long-term monitoring process is created. It means that actions and initiatives, but also emergent activities need to be aligned with sensemaking and both long- and short-term missions. When we then use such developmental evaluation periodically, it gives direction to the next steps to be taken. The evaluation is then not only an instrument for accountability afterwards, but it functions as a compass with which all those involved keep the mission of both the ICOP and the targeted local SIEHL in mind along the way. With it, we focus on what learning occurs on a continuous basis throughout the course participation. For it, our learners are provided with multiple opportunities of group and individual dialogue for supportive feedback and reflection related to the new skills or knowledge acquired, which includes timeline evaluation instruments. This helps the learners to deeply</p>
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	<p>dive into their own learning. It assists in the development of independent learners and results in deeper thinking and long-term retention of the learned concepts. This can be complemented by a variety of self-assessment (individual learning goals) and peer-assessment (collective learning goals) opportunities. It means that the learners (individually and collectively) assess their own work to improve performance as they identify discrepancies between current and desired performance. This assessment approach is an essential component of cognitive and constructivist theories of learning and motivation. It is important for the knowledge construction and conceptualized in a cyclical, ongoing process of self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and identification and implementation of instructional correctives.</p>
<p>CREDIT VALUE, DURATION, AND RECOGNITION</p>	<p>Our course is developed to pilot trainings towards facilitating international communities of practice in the scope of the NEST European Innovation Alliance for Healthy Living. Due to the above principles of our capacity building approach, it is not necessarily built to align with formal credit systems. Yet, the course is built in a way that it is possible to bridge the learning in complexity approach towards ECTS to facilitate recognition. However, the recognition of the individual learning goals or learning outcomes of any adapted courses that are integrated into existing learning programmes lies in the sole responsibility of the respective education provider. The recommendations for bridging the training to formal education proposes that each learning unit would have a proposed value of 1 ECTS. Whereby each learning unit includes high amounts of in practice learning elements through the above-mentioned reciprocal learning and co-creation processes at international community of practice and local social innovation ecosystem levels. 1 ECTS may then equal between 25 and 30 hours of workload, including self-learning. If integrated into existing learning programmes, the adapted, contextualized course would ideally result into a 4 to 6 ECTS CPD course, with a total workload of app. 100 to 120 learning hours. If provided as a standalone CPD course, a successful participant may receive a NEST Certificate of Participation. The certificate describes the purpose, scope, level, and learning outcomes of the course to make it easier for employers and educational institutions to understand the qualification.</p>
<p>COURSE DISCLAIMER</p>	<p>The course is licensed under the Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 I Attribution-Non-commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International. You are free to apply our course materials, and to build upon the material, if it is non-commercial and with appropriate credit provided. If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must make reference to and distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.</p>

## PART C – ICOP MENTORS EMPOWERMENT GUIDELINES

### What are Nest ICOP Mentors?

NEST ICOP Mentors are persons that hold experience in facilitating social innovation ecosystems in a multi-dimensional and trans-cultural context. Next to their own learning experiences, they have the capacity to empower other facilitators and to support their learning pathways and co-creation processes. Such mentoring can have significant benefit for the facilitators, equipping them not only to facilitate the ICOP processes but supporting their own personal and professional development even beyond.

## What are the Roles of Nest ICOP Mentors?

As a mentor, one has the invaluable opportunity to guide, inspire, and support the activities and learning of others. Being a “good” mentor therefore requires a blend of skills and knowledge related to ICOP facilitation, but also experience, patience, empathy, guidance, and openness for own learning. First and foremost, the mentor needs to understand their role. They need to recognize that a mentor is not a lecturer but a guide and supporter. Their objective is to facilitate growth, encourage critical thinking, and offer advice and empowerment when needed. For it, we need to maintain a balance between providing insights and allowing mentees to discover and learn on their own.

## What means Capacity Building in Mentoring?

Capacity building focuses on empowering the mentees to develop the skills, confidence, and self-reliance they need to thrive. It encourages the mentor to create supportive environments where the mentees feel equipped to address challenges and seize opportunities independently. Key principles of capacity-building include fostering empowerment, promoting continuous learning, and providing a supportive framework that nurtures growth. With this approach the mentees are supported to navigate both personal and ICOP-level challenges with more competence and confidence.

## What are our Principles for Mentoring?

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST AND CLEAR GOALS**

Trust is the foundation of any successful mentor-mentee-relationship. Therefore, we need to take time to establish a genuine, trust-based rapport with our mentees. This is especially important when mentoring takes place related to complex challenges and in social innovation ecosystems. Therefore, it is important to be approachable, to listen actively, and to create a safe space where the mentee feels comfortable sharing their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations. This can be supported by establishing clear and achievable goals for your mentoring relationship, and it helps to understand the mentee's expectations and to align them with the purpose of mentorship, as well as to the vision and mission of the ICOP. You may document these objectives and revisit them periodically to track progress, for example during the above-mentioned timeline sessions.

### **SHARE YOUR OWN LEARNING JOURNEY**

Communication is key to mentorship. Therefore, tailor your communication style to match the individual needs and preferences of your mentee. Be a good listener, ask open-ended questions, and provide constructive feedback. Encourage your mentee to articulate their thoughts and actively engage in meaningful conversations. At the same time, it is important to offer valuable insights and experiences from your own learning journey. Share both successes and failures, highlighting the lessons learned. However, ensure that your experiences are relatable and relevant to the mentee's situation. Real-life examples can be powerful guidance tools.

## **EMPOWER CRITICAL THINKING**

Guide your mentees to think critically and make their own informed decisions. In social innovation ecosystems, failure is part of the learning pathway. Encourage them to analyse situations, explore solutions, and take ownership of their choices. Foster independence and self-reliance by gradually reducing your level of intervention as they gain confidence and proficiency. Be the mentor who is there for support but don't do everything for the ICOP facilitator. For it, consider that growth takes time. Therefore, be patient and understanding as the facilitator navigates their journey. Offer encouragement, celebrate their achievements, and provide support during challenging times. Let them know that setbacks are part of the learning process and opportunities for growth.

## **KEEP YOURSELF INFORMED**

Keep yourself informed about advancements in your mentee's field of interest. This includes the specific topic of the ICOP, healthy living in general, and also relevant community work and collaboration structures. In addition, this may include new means of communication, collaboration, or development that are used by the ICOP members. Stay relevant by reading, attending workshops, and engaging in continuous learning. This ensures that your guidance is up to date and valuable for the mentee's aims and development.

## **FACILITATE OPPORTUNITIES AND ACKNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY**

Facilitate opportunities for the mentees to expand their networks. Learning from others, also in the context of other cultures and backgrounds, is seen as a real driver in social innovation. Encourage them to attend events, join professional organisations, and connect with experts. This includes existing NEST networks and channels. Networking helps them gain insights, build relationships, and broaden their horizons. Alongside, acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of your mentee. Embrace inclusivity and ensure that your guidance respects and accommodates their individual uniqueness. Remind yourself that you are a guide and role model but that they must be allowed to develop themselves.

## **How to Overcome Challenges in Mentoring**

For sure, mentoring ICOP facilitators is not without challenges. Resistance to new methods, balancing diverse needs, and limited resources can pose obstacles. However, these challenges can be addressed through effective communication, personalized support, and creative problem-solving.

By fostering open dialogue, tailoring strategies to individual needs, and leveraging available resources innovatively, you can help to overcome barriers and drive impactful mentoring outcomes. Through hands-on activities, reflective practices, and constructive feedback, you can facilitate skill-building that prepares your mentee to take on their different roles within the ICOP.

By equipping them with the tools they need, you can ensure they are well-prepared to implement. A successful mentoring relationship therefore fosters self-efficacy by encouraging your mentees to make decisions, take initiative, and take responsibility for their development. Confidence and independence are crucial not only for personal growth but also for the ability to inspire and lead others in creating positive community change.

In this regard, Appreciative Questioning is a strength-based, positive approach that focuses on exploring what is working well, what the facilitators value, and what their aspirations are. Rather than focusing on problems or deficits, it encourages them to reflect on their successes, values, and aspirations, as well as identifying strengths, and envisioning desired positive outcomes.

By asking open-ended, affirming questions, the approach helps to uncover potential, building confidence, and inspiring action. It fosters a mindset of growth and possibility, making it particularly effective in empowering individuals and their teams.

By using Appreciative Questioning, you can encourage the facilitator to focus on what is possible, and to build on their strengths, and take meaningful action. This not only empowers them as leaders, but it may also create a ripple effect of fostering a culture of positive action across the ICOPs and the local social innovation ecosystems.

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