



ToP Network CONNECTIONS

HELLO,

In this issue, we're excited to share highlights from the ToP Network, including our next ToP Network Open House. This time, we're using the space to give ToP workgroups a place to meet, and to give the wider network a chance to practice and workshop new ideas together.

We'll also cover learnings from our past Open House, information about the next Professional Development Series, an update on the ToP Network's new website, and our newest Certified ToP Facilitators.

It's also nomination season for the ToP Board. We're especially looking for a Board Treasurer, and for anyone interested in organizing a Community of Practice (CoP).

Enjoy this issue,

The ToP Network Board

IN THIS ISSUE

- ToP Network Open House
- Dates to Stay Connected
- CoP Requests
- Open House Learnings
- Professional Development Series
- Help Shape the Global Picture of Facilitation
- ToP Network Communication
- Wild Apricot Update
- New CTF Celebration
- Seeking Board Nominations
- Annual Report Creation

SAVE THE DATE!



The next quarterly trainer meetup will be held on **Oct 16th from 1-3pm CT.**

More information will be released soon but you can register now. We hope to see you there!

Charity, Stephanie & Jeremy (TTLF)

[Register Here](#)



TOP NETWORK
Participate. Educate. Facilitate. Innovate.

TOP NETWORK OPEN HOUSE

September 23rd 4:00–5:30 CDT with a 30 minute water cooler after

The ToP Network board of directors is excited to continue hosting an opportunity to connect, learn, and share with one another at the **ToP Network Open House**, hosted quarterly on Zoom.



These gatherings will be a space for facilitators and trainers to:

- Share insights, challenges, and practices from your own work
- Strengthen connections across our ToP community
- Explore timely topics such as facilitating in times of uncertainty, nuances of strategic planning, or the use of AI in facilitation.

This quarter's Open House will be hosted by Karie Terhark and Beth Stoffmacher on September 23rd, 4:00 – 5:30 pm CT with a 30-minute water cooler after the meeting.

[Register Here](#)



Questions?

Please reach out to Beth Stoffmacher | stoffmacherconsulting@gmail.com

STAY CONNECTED

- **ToP Open House**
September 23 | 4:00–5:30 pm CT
- **Professional Development Series**
September 24 | 12:00–1:30 pm PT
- **ToP Trainer (Re)Orientation Session #3**
October 14 | 1:00–2:30 pm PT
- **ToP Trainer Meet-up**
October 16 | 1:00–3:00 p.m. CT
- **ToP Network Monthly Board Meeting**
Oct 19, Nov 16, Dec 14 | 5:00–7:00 pm CT
- **ToP Annual Meeting**
January 21st | 9:00–11:30 am CT

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (CoP)

Are you interested in gathering fellow ToP Network members to take a deep dive into a specific topic or forming an affinity group? Take a moment to tell us about the group and how we can support you in getting the group formed.

Feel free to reach out to:
Ronda Alexander.

[Tell Us More About the CoP You'd Like to Organize](#)



OPEN HOUSE LEARNINGS

Our Quarterly Open Houses continue to be one of the best parts of being in this network — a chance to trade real stories from the field, compare notes on what's working, and walk away with a few new tricks for the toolkit. This June, Open House attendees had two conversations that generated a great mix of practical tips and bigger-picture reflection: **The Nuances of Strategic Planning** and **Finding Client Opportunities**. Here's a recap for anyone who couldn't join, and a refresher for those who were in the room.

First name shout out and special thanks to the following facilitators for attending the June Open house and your rich discussions- Diana, Jenny, Mara, Suzanne, Deb, Colleen, Margaret, Kathleen, Krystallyn, Antonia, Patricia & Alisa.

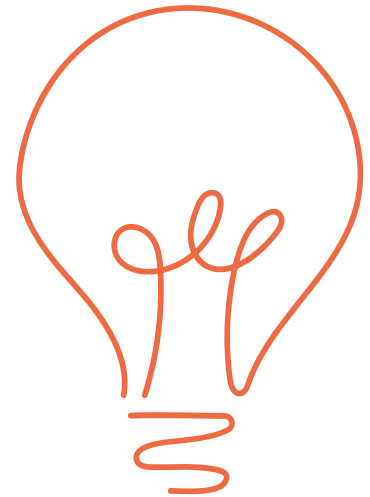


Nuances of Strategic Planning – Key Nuggets

- A good vision name = Juicy adjective, juicy adjective + noun--connects to the why.
- What's lost is consensus. What's gained is impact--27 meetings held over a month that lead to one larger 2 day workshop. Must have two skilled facilitators to keep things moving along. Our agenda was: historical scan, vision, contradictions, strategic directions and identified some goals for the next 3 years. (about 30 to 45 mins each)
- Modified Strategic Plan option--1 day agenda: 1st hour-environmental scan, 2nd hour practical vision, no underlying contradictions workshop. Did that by way of SWOT analysis.

OPEN HOUSE LEARNINGS (cont'd)

- Tips and tricks for Underlying Contradictions: Block and what it blocks, assign small groups to name the remaining columns after naming the first one. Use AI to help create suggestions. Concerns that AI removes the opportunity for true consensus, internalizing, the beneficial struggle. And that folks may have resistance to using AI--ask permission. Ask folks to pair on one particular column and whomever has an idea first shares. Watch to make sure they're following the steps/process for naming. Five why's--ask the question five times following the answers to each question.
- Reality check each UC's: When you have a name ask: Is it real? How do we participate in it? How is this obstacle being sustained?
- Gestalt--take each contradiction and say if we were able to deal with this, which vision elements would it impact?
- Strategies--if we made progress on this strategy, which obstacles would it unblock and which vision element would it impact.
- Project implementation--add a line to ask which vision elements are targeted
- Can use the ToP Strategic Planning process on a very narrow issue
- Applicable to adaptive leadership
- Historical scan--Journey wall or wall of wonder for repeat clients and for project analysis
- Strategic Action plan Vision, Current Reality, Actions brainstorm, project implementation
- Focused implementation can be done over time in teams and then have a plenary to return to the results
- Vision on afternoon of day 1, uc and sd on day 2, Focused Implementation on morning of day 3.
- Capture a team convener for each strategic action/ working group AND a person who is accountable for each project within a team



OPEN HOUSE LEARNINGS (cont'd)

Finding Client Opportunities – Key Nuggets

Context / Observations:

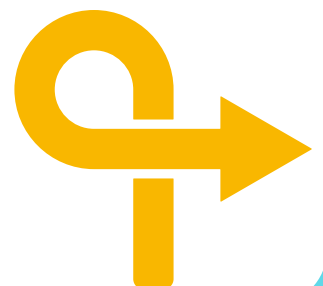
- The funding and policy environment has made client work precarious and pervasive; equity wording in proposals is changing.
- Even seasoned facilitators are having an ebb in work.
- In Minnesota, there was disruption because of immigration problems.

Recommendations:

- Take on pro bono work to maintain existing projects.
- Think about who still has money after funding cuts.
- Use co-facilitation to supplement work, though there are fewer options there too.
- Consider personified leadership – company or methodology-branded leadership training that links to established clients and gigs.
- Get certified with your state as a vendor to get on the list. (Be sure to check which states and counties require resident status for their vendor lists.)
- Use the snowball method with clients to find additional work.
- Lean into referrals – most work has come this way.
- Seek out clients with aligned values, and stay persistent with follow-ups.
- Fill out consultant forms, attend events hosted by prime clients, get an introduction, and attend webinars.
- Have a website to refer people to.
- Send LinkedIn pings to people working at prime client organizations.
- Post useful content on LinkedIn.

Closing Thought

Between these two conversations, a common thread emerged: facilitators are adapting – compressing timelines without losing rigor, and building relationships without losing patience – even in a harder environment. Thank you to everyone who joined the June Open House and shared so openly. We look forward to seeing you at the next one on September 23, 2026!



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES



Facilitators set the tone for how people show up, speak up, and learn together. This session explores what psychological safety really means in practice and why it is essential for effective facilitation. Through reflection, discussion, and applied tools, participants will identify the subtle moments that shape trust and discover concrete ways to make honesty, curiosity, and collaboration feel safe in any group setting. By the end, each participant will leave with one clear commitment to strengthen psychological safety in their own facilitation practice.

Rational Aim:

- To explore and surface tangible strategies facilitators can use to foster psychological safety, and to identify one actionable commitment each participant will take forward into their own facilitation practice.

Experiential Aim:

- To create a safe, creative space where facilitators feel connected, seen, and supported in reflecting honestly on their role in psychological safety, and leave recharged with clarity and inspiration.

Registration: \$10 Members; \$40 Non Members

[Register Here](#)



Help Shape the Global Picture of Facilitation

Take the State of Facilitation Survey



SessionLab has launched the fifth edition of its State of Facilitation Survey, and this year's focus is **Growth**: how facilitators develop their craft, how freelancers and agencies grow their business, and how facilitation is taking root inside organizations.

As ToP practitioners and trainers, our lived experience is exactly the kind of data that makes this report meaningful for the field. The survey is available in English with automatic browser translation, so you can respond in the language you're most comfortable with.

The full report — data plus expert commentary — will be freely available starting January 2027.

Take the Survey



ToP Network Communication Planning

Content Planning for 2027



The Communications Team is busy planning informative content for the entire ToP Network via this quarterly **ToP Connections** newsletter and valuable training updates for our ToP Trainers via a quarterly **Trainer-2-Trainer** newsletter.

The latest Trainer-2-Trainer newsletter was sent on July 30th. If you are a trainer and didn't receive it, please reach out to...

brigid@berileyconsulting.com
alisaoyler@gmail.com

The next quarterly ToP Connections Newsletter will go out in December. If you have labs, events, surveys, resources, or working group content to share, please email any ToP Board member.

WILD APRICOT UPDATE

Building a New ToP Network Website

Exciting work is underway on a new ToP Network website! We are transitioning from MemberClicks to Wild Apricot, creating a more user-friendly home for our website, membership information, events, registrations, payments, forums, resources, CTF directory, and member services.



Our project team includes Vicki Allen, Hannah Angel, Suzanne Esber, Amy Haynes, Christine Hall, Shelby Pierce, Rachael Mizuno, and Beth Stoffmacher, Team members have been developing content, planning navigation, and identifying features that will make the site valuable to members and visitors.

We have hired Nicasio Design & Development, Wild Apricot website specialists, to help build the site, transfer membership data, and train our administrators.

The new site will make it easier to:

- ✓ **learn about ToP network**
- ✓ **explore facilitation pathways**
- ✓ **register for events**
- ✓ **access facilitator and trainer resources**

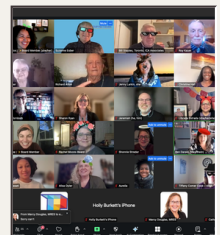
And we need your help with one more thing — photos! A

website is only as vibrant as the images that bring it to life, and we want the new site to reflect our real community: trainings, gatherings, facilitation in action, and the people who make ToP Network what it is. If you have photos from ToP events you'd be willing to share, please submit them. It only takes a couple of minutes, and every photo helps tell our story. Feel free to share this with fellow practitioners, too!

SUBMIT PHOTOS HERE!



Development began in August with an estimated eight-week timeline. We look forward to unveiling our new ToP Network website this fall!



Should you have ideas and suggestions for the new website, email Suzanne Esber at shesber@gmail.com. Give us your input.



LET'S CELEBRATE NEW CTF – RUTHIE YOW!

Please join us in welcoming Ruthie Yow as an official Certified ToP Facilitator! Ruthie is one of kindest, thoughtful and encouraging facilitators you will meet. She is extremely humble and would never offer a laundry list of her accomplishments but we can do that here today!



Ruthie has a PhD in American Studies and African American Studies from Yale. She has written a book – *Students of the Dream: Resegregation in a Southern City*, and it's available through Harvard University Press. She currently is the Associate Director at the Center for Sustainable Communities Research and Education at Georgia Tech.

Throughout all these accomplishments, Ruthie has remained steadfast in her commitment to community and equity – and is deeply grounded by those values everywhere she shows up. Her facilitation efforts reach the students she teaches- the communities throughout Atlanta she co-creates with, and the groups and departments at Georgia Tech and other Organizations she partners with.

Ruthie is a board member of the Asset Based Community Development Institute and has partnered with all sorts of folks in the ToP Network over the years. She is truly a gem of a human, and we are very lucky to have her as a part of our CTF cadre! Reach out and get to know Ruthie – you will be in for a treat! Ruthie's Email – ruth.yow@gatech.edu

Visit Ruthie's Website



Join the ToP Network Board (2027–2029 Term)

Help shape ToP Network's next chapter! We're seeking nominations for our 2027–2029 Board of Directors — especially seasoned trainers and practitioners, and someone ready to step into the Treasurer role.



Board members lead events, support Network initiatives, and stay actively engaged — not just attend meetings. We're looking for strong alignment with our mission, collaborative leadership, and 5–10 hrs/month capacity. Directors serve two-year terms (up to four consecutive) as unpaid, dues-paying members, guided by participatory, equity-centered practice.

Nominate someone (or yourself!): Our Nominating Committee will follow up with each nominee to talk through the role — so don't hold back.



Questions? Contact Ronda Alexander, ralexander@globalreachconsulting.co
Thank you for helping lead us forward! for nominations.

CALLING ALL ACTION TEAMS! *Annual Report Creation*

We are starting to gather information and copy for the 2026 ToP Network Annual Report. Our goal is to complete this report, ready for review before our Annual Meeting on January 21st.



Please contribute any data and details for the groups you are a part of for the annual report!

[Link to the 2026 Co-Created
Annual Report Submission Sheet](#)



SAVE THE DATE! ANNUAL MEETING



It's hard to believe but our annual meeting is just around the corner on **January 21, 2027**, 9:00–11:30 am CT. Registration is now OPEN on Memberclicks.

This Annual Meeting is a vital opportunity to connect, contribute, and discover clear pathways for engaging in the ToP Network in ways that matter most to you. Your voice, your presence, and your participation help shape the connections, learning opportunities, resources, and initiatives that support ToP practitioners and expand the use of ToP methods in facilitation. Join us to learn how to plug into communities, projects, and leadership that meet your needs and fuel your professional growth!

Rational Aims

- Vote on the slate of 2027 Board members
- Be informed of the current state of the ToP Network & ToP Training system, celebrate successes from 2025 and set the stage for action in 2027
- Learn details about what's in store for the upcoming 2027 ToP Gathering – held Virtually in April

Experiential Aims

- Foster transparency, shared understanding, and trust across the Network
- Deepen meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging among ToP Network members
- Increase member awareness of Network initiatives, opportunities, and stories of impact

Register now and be part of shaping what's possible for 2027 and beyond—together.



ARE YOU A MEMBER?

Now is a great time to join the network! There are so many exciting events and initiatives on the horizon and we want you join us!

TOP NETWORK



CONSIDER THESE AMAZING BENEFITS:



Ready for a
Recharge?

Plug into
ToP
Network!



Membership in a unique learning community of facilitators and trainers

Access to ToP wisdom and experience through virtual interchange with ToP Network colleagues

Opportunities to network with other ToP Network members for professional development and client engagement

Input and engagement with Top Network Task Teams and the Board

Reduced rates to the Annual Gathering, Professional Development Workshops, and events

Access to an online Resource Library where we share the collective wisdom and writings of ToP practitioners

Listing your ToP Network Membership as a professional affiliation on your resume

- ◆ Facilitator Member \$125 (ToP Practitioner)
- ◆ ToP Trainer Member \$125 (Qualified Trainer, Mentor Trainer, Apprentice)
- ◆ Student Member \$50 (High School or University Student)
- ◆ Emeritus Member \$25 (Retired ToP Practitioner or ToP Trainer)

JOIN THE NETWORK

