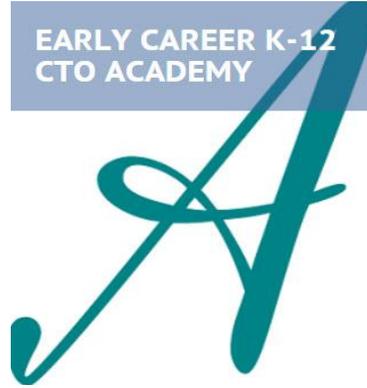# Early Career K-12 CTO Handbook

2022-2023

CoSN Early Career K-12 CTO Academy
Participant Handbook

We are excited to have you as a participant in CoSN's exciting Early Career K-12 CTO Academy.

What is the Early Career K-12 CTO Academy?
CoSN's Early Career K-12 CTO Academy is a kickoff virtual meeting followed by a year of online learning modules designed to provide early career CTOs, future CTOs, and high level edTech leaders with practical strategies to succeed and survive. The cohort members will also participate in online deep dive discussions with content experts. Each participant will be paired with an experienced and proven edtech leader as a thought partner. Participants will be able to consult their throught partners throughout the eight month academy for timely guidance or suggestions concerning immediate or ongoing issues and on the development of their capstone project. Several of the capstone projects may be selected to be presented at the 2023 CoSN Conference. Throughout the Academy, participants will build a professional network of colleagues and critical friends.

What constitutes an early career K-12 CTO?
CoSN defines an early career K-12 CTO as one who has been in the position for four years or less. We welcome other high level edTech leaders and future CTOs to benefit from the Academy experience. For simplicity's sake, we refer to all participants as early career CTOs.

What are the expectations of each participant in the Early Career K-12 CTO Academy?
As a participant, you are expected to attend the two online meetings each month, complete a capstone project on a topic you are currently working on, and attend the 2023CoSN conference if possible for a F2F social event.

How does CoSN define "thought partner"?
Thought partners are mentors with whom you have an ongoing relationship. Thought partners share their expertise and knowledge with each other to improve thinking and offer their opinions and beliefs to ongoing discussions with the intent of helping each other find solutions, think through ideas, and conquer challenges. Thought partners build a trusted relationship with cohort members and leverage that relationship to maintain a positive environment in the face of disagreement. Thought partners do not seek to criticize each other's ideas or change them but to make them better through shared knowledge and collaboration.

Who are the thought partners and how will participants be matched with their thought partners? The thought partners are current or recently retired CTOs with exemplary leadership skills and a proven track record of digital transformation. The thought partners come from both technical industry and education backgrounds. Each thought partner completes a brief profile detailing their background, experiences, and areas of expertise. As a general practice, Academy participants will select their thought partners. We emphasize

that participants select partners with whom they have something in common but also with partners that can offer them a new perspective or advice on missing skills.

What is the thought partner's role?
Your thought partner has committed to use his/her time and talents to better you in your role as an Early Career K-12 CTO. He/She will assist you in improving the skills needed to provide leadership and vision in your district, navigate technical challenges, build and staff a team, draft and implement a technology plan, work with other departments, and ensure that your technology department is focused on student learning. He/She is expected to help you build on your existing leadership skills, fine tune your communication skills, refine your soft skills, take a deep dive into the importance of culture, and streamline procedures and processes.

Thought partnering is a confidential and personalized professional relationship. CoSN encourages you to utilize your thought partner and asks that you engage your thought partner in planning the details of your personalized program and capitalize on your thought partner's experience. Below is a list of the responsibilities of a thought partner:

- Listen, support, and coach
- Share your lessons learned
- Share your expertise and insight
- Inspire your partner to develop vision and leadership skills
- Observe your partner's skill and talent development over time providing professional feedback when needed
- Encourage participants to build relationships with business managers, human resource directors, curriculum directors, and other educational personnel
- Leverage CoSN resources and the CoSN online community when needed
- Attend and actively participate in a minimum of three video conference or F2F thought partner meetings throughout the year. However, we encourage participants and Thought Partners to touch base via email at a minimum, once per month. The Early Career K-12 CTO Academy Program Facilitator will work with you to schedule and facilitate the introductory meeting
- Give feedback to the Program Facilitator

A deep, positive, ongoing thought partnership will achieve:
- A professional relationship that will last over time;
- Value for both the Thought Partner and Early Career K-12 CTO; and
- Beneficial, personalized guidance and expertise on key issues for the Early Career K-12 CTO.

How should thought partners and participants communicate?
You and your thought partner should establish your own communication style. CoSN anticipates different communication styles consisting of phone calls, emails, chats, texts, video conferencing and in-person conversations at the CoSN conference. While CoSN asks you to participate in at least three thought partner meetings, we encourage you to touch base every

month or as frequently as needed.

You should build in an opportunity mid-program to reflect on whether the communication style you and your partner have chosen is effective and achieving the desired dialogue. Please let the Program Facilitator (Donna Williamson) know if the communication does not seem to be effective or if you are having issues with communications.

To establish effective communication with your partner:

- Be available and discuss modes of communications and schedules at the introductory meeting.
- Reach out periodically or share updates pertaining to previous conversations.
- Be open to strong, honest, positive feedback.
- Make time in your busy schedule to virtually meet with your thought partner and let him/her know in advance if you need to reschedule.
- Keep track of your communications. This will help you recall your conversations, provide you with a snapshot of your partner's conversations over time, and help CoSN continue to develop the thought partnering aspect of the overall program. A shared Google doc may work to document communication dates, times, and topics.

What is the thought partner's role in the capstone project?
Each participant in the Early Career K-12 CTO Academy is required to complete a capstone project. Each participant will work independently or in a small group (depending on the project) to develop a plan of action to tackle an important educational or operational challenge in his or her district.

During the initial welcome meeting, the Program Facilitator will introduce the capstone project and provide details on the capstone process and presentations at the following year's CoSN conference. Participants will then work on the project over the length of the program conducting research, working with school system staff and stakeholders, seeking guidance from their thought partners, and documenting their progress. The final step will be to develop a five minute ignite session with slides summarizing the work. During the CoSN conference, selected participants will present their capstone projects to the CoSN audience.

Collaborate with your thought partner along the way. He/She can provide insight, serve as a sounding board, and ask questions to provoke you to think deeply—or perhaps differently—about your selected capstone project. CoSN asks that you review your final capstone project with your thought partner prior to recording and presenting your presentation to the Program Facilitator.

Contact Information and Feedback
Please email the program team below if you need assistance or would like to share feedback:
- Donna Williamson, Program Facilitator - dwilliamson@cosn.org
- Jill Brown, Senior Manager of Professional Advancement - jbrown@cosn.org