

Good day to you all in Work Package 6.

1. My name is Laurence Horton. I'm with the Digital Curation Centre which is represented in the Skills4EOSC project by The University of Edinburgh, although the DCC is also hosted by the University of Glasgow, which explains my affiliation and email address.

I'm going to talk for a few minutes about task 6.2, starter kits for professional networks.

2. The task in this part of work package 6 was to develop step-by-step starter kits that support the creation of new professional and sustainable networks where gaps were identified in task 6.1, which was on mapping professional networks.

The brief in the project proposal is that kits will build upon the existing International Network of Open Science Communities "Open Science Community Starter Kit".

At least two kits required to be developed. One, a generic network starter kit, and to be a dedicated kit for data stewards' networks.

Delivery of these starter kits was month 12 of Skills4EOSC which is August 2023.

3. So, at the end of the third quarter where are we and what have we done?

We have delivered completed the two starter kits and here are the references for you to go and look at them.

4. Just to give you a very quick overview, the kits are built around three main resources on establishing and sustaining communities.

One is the Centre for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement's Community Participation model. This illustrates well how communities can change over time in how they operate.

Participation can move across stages of Convey/Consume, Contribute, Collaborate, and Co-create. The model also gives us the useful concept of scaffolding, for addressing obstacles to joining and being active in the community.

Another is the concept of the Community of Practice, identified by Wenger-Trayner. This is a less formal approach, that emphasises engagement in a process of collective learning in a shared domain

There is also the Community Canvas resource, which is a framework to help build and run a new community, or analyse and improve an existing one. It is particularly useful in the set of questions it provides that are intended to engage leaders and get them thinking critically about their community.

Finally, reference is also made to some literature from management theory and social psychology on group tasks and dynamics. For example, Groupthink on conformity and Tuckman on small group work.

The kits also make reference to other parts of the Skills4EOSC project.

Task 6.1 was a starter point for our work in mapping existing professional networks in Europe, and we have reference to that resource as a good place to start scoping potential networks or communities.

Also, reference is made to task 2.1 which produced a set of minimum viable skills for Data Stewards to help identify potential data steward related topics for communities to build around.

A couple of case studies have been included to, it is hoped, bring out some of the conceptual elements covered in the toolkits.

These are not meant to be exemplars (though you could possibly take them as such). We are not saying that other networks should be as good or be like these, they are there just to illustrate how approaches to creating and managing networks and communities can be applied.

For the Data Steward kit, we look at the Dutch Data Steward Network, and the ELIXIER Data Management Working group in the United Kingdom. We were also able to include some of the work the ICDI network in Italy has done on starting a data steward community there.

For the generic kit, we summarise the Flemish Data Research Network, and the rOpenSci community.

5. We were grateful to have a good set of reviewers who provided us with constructive – and critically, timely! – reviews. There was also very useful comments and contributions from Curtis and Emma Lazzeri at GARR at the end that really helped put the kits in good shape for delivery.

6. The review comments, in summary, were to be clearer conceptually about what we were talking about. Specifically, using the terms “community” and “networks”. Networks have loose,

limited bonds between people. Communities, however, are mutually supportive and based on a purpose and intentioned to connect everyone in that community. Most of the resources referenced in the toolkit are based on the concept of community, so the focus in the kits is on building communities.

There was a need for the kits to provide more practical guidance on doing a lot of these things and, for example, surveying potential communities, agendas for kick-off meetings, writing positionality statements, and facilitating meetings.

Also, we worked signposting within the toolkit towards specific sections and actions.

And of course, tidying up the text in terms of writing style, typos, tenses, and language.

7. What is next?

Obviously, the test of the value of the kits is in their use.

Here's the Zenodo download statistics for the starter kits as of 27 September 2023.

If you're setting up a community or know someone who is, it would be good to know if the kits are of use. We know they are already being used inside and outside the Skills4EOSC consortium in Italy and Portugal.

8. Thank you. I'm sorry I cannot present this in person today, but I'm happy to answer any questions you might have by email.