ITAV in Practice: Beta Testing Materials: Governance

Welcome!

The ITAV in Practice toolkit includes an adaptable set of tools, templates, exercises, checklists, and resources for practical use in planning and managing sustainability for open source software (OSS) initiatives serving cultural and scientific heritage organizations.

Expand the sections below for beta testing instructions and useful background material.

Instructions for Beta Testing the ITAV Toolkit

Your program has been assigned to beta test and provide feedback on the Governance toolkit activities.

1. If you haven’t already, please review the pertinent parts of the ITAV Guidebook.
   a. Introductory materials, pp. 5-10
   b. Governance section, pp. 11-14
2. Identify what phase your program is in; see What Phase Is Your Program below for details.
3. Review the Governance activities for Phases 1, 2, or 3.
4. Decide which activities your program would like to test. Typically your program will select activities from within your Phase, but you are welcome to test activities from other phases if they sound pertinent.
   a. Identify someone to serve as facilitator for each activity you will conduct
   b. Determine whether you will complete the activity virtually or in person
   c. Download the instructions for local use, or copy the Google doc if you would like to collaborate with others online.
5. Determine a timeline for conducting the activities. All activities and feedback should be completed by April 30, 2021.
6. Complete the activities and fill out a preliminary evaluation worksheet for each activity by April 30, 2021.
   a. Completed evaluation worksheets can be emailed to your facet liaison, Laurie Arp. Links to Google docs are fine, too.
7. Fill out the full beta testing evaluation instrument. This will be provided after April 30th.
8. Participate in a 1:1 call to talk through your program’s impressions and experiences.

What Phase Is Your Program?

For each facet, give your program a score from 1-10 based on your knowledge of your program’s strengths and weaknesses in that area. Scores between 0-3 will align most closely with Phase I, between 4-7 with Phase II, and 8-10 with Phase III.

Follow along on the wiki to select your phase, or download the worksheet.

Facet: Governance

A governance model describes the roles that project participants can take on and the process for decision making within the project. In addition, it describes the ground rules for participation in the project and the processes for communicating and sharing within the project team and community.

- **Phase 1, Establishing**: Generally still working with original software engineers, project staff, funder, or sponsoring organization. The application may not have end users yet, leading to a “good faith over governance” approach.

- **Phase 2, Stabilizing**: Governance is functional but limited in one or more aspects. Documented policies and procedures exist, but often still exhibit a strong influence from founders. Moving forward will require succession planning.

- **Phase 3, Evolving**: Programs benefiting from strong management structures, although not all have formal governance. Many are part of umbrella organizations, and have tried-and-tested business models.

General Facilitation Instructions

The tools in the ITAVIP Toolkit are designed to be done by your program without help from an outside consultant. For many of the activities, it is beneficial to have someone serve as facilitator. Below are some general facilitation guidelines helpful across the tools and activities. In the instructions for some activities, there are additional specific facilitation notes.

Facilitation can be defined as “guiding the process of discussion amongst a group (more than 2 people) towards a certain outcome”. [https://medium.com/@saahilsood/what-are-the-4-key-traits-of-an-excellent-facilitator-29096618ad2](https://medium.com/@saahilsood/what-are-the-4-key-traits-of-an-excellent-facilitator-29096618ad2)
Facilitation Guidelines

Facilitator Qualities: Good qualities for a potential facilitator include:

- Effective communication skills - probing, listening, etc.
- Open to change
- Ability to synthesize
- Keen observation skills
- Maintains constant neutrality
- Promotes constructive feedback
- Asks versus tells
- Managing energy and time
- Patience

Facilitation: Ideally, the session should be facilitated by someone from outside the current governance model.

Format: Sessions can be conducted online or in person. In person sessions require a deeper commitment to the process and often engender more trust and fuller discussion, but in person meetings are not always feasible.

Note Taking: For in person meetings, a specific note-taker (separate from the facilitator) should be assigned and should document responses on whiteboards or large pads. This helps underscore the discussion and enables participants to see if something was misunderstood. For online meetings, the note-taker should take notes via a shared doc so all have access to the notes during the session. Notes should be distributed afterwards for review and approval.

Participation: Make sure to encourage broad suggestions from the entire group. Some participants will be more comfortable if they are given preparatory materials. Some are best “on the fly”. There is also a mix of comfort level in group discussions. Consider how to best encourage everyone’s participation.

Define Rules of Engagement: Confirm expectations around behavior during activities, such as: checking ego and titles at the door, no interruptions when someone is talking, sticking to schedule (if it’s a long one), using a “parking lot” for topics that are either irrelevant for the meeting or too big to discuss right now.

Re-framing: Before diving in to find solutions, it may be helpful for the facilitator or the team to re-frame their “problems” into actionable questions. This may also broaden the range of solutions. For example, if the problem were “the developers are scaring the non-developers away.” It can be rephrased to “How might we enable the non-developers to contribute meaningfully?”

Decisions and Gaining Consensus: For each session, clarify - are you looking for a decision in the session or consensus. If a decision, identify a decider (who or what can be a tiebreaker)? If consensus, suggestions are often made in the activity, or you can consider additional options.

Materials/Supplies: If in person, group activities would require a room, whiteboards or large pads, sticky notes, dot stickers, and markers. If online, make sure to send materials in advance. Download our planning worksheet here.

Some beta testers have asked for suggestions for tools or platforms to facilitate online meetings.

Online tools that ITAV program staff and our LYRASIS colleagues have used include: GroupMap, Mindmeister and Miro.

Please note, we are NOT endorsing these options, only including them here as potential resources that have been used and suggested by community members.