ITAViP Toolkit: Getting Started

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. Reading through this Getting Started guide will start you off on a stronger footing, but if you’re impatient you’re welcome to jump in and start working through the activities in each facet or follow along our persona paths.

Getting Started with the ITAViP Toolkit

1. Review the critical elements of the ITAV Guidebook.
   a. Introductory materials, pp. 5-10
   b. Governance section, pp. 11-14
   c. Technology section, pp. 20-23
   d. Resources section, pp. 26-29
   e. Community Engagement section, pp. 32-36

2. For each facet, identify what phase your program is in.

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.

Facet: Technology

The core of each program is an open source software application serving cultural heritage organizations. There are parallels with proprietary software development processes, but working within the open source world brings its own challenges around community, resources, and governance that affect the software development process.

- Phase 1, Laying the Groundwork: Programs are in the design, pre-release, or early beta-testing phase of software development. Programs may have no users, or a core of committed early adopters. May have both technical and resource challenges.
- Phase 2, Expanding and Integrating: Programs have had more than one public release, developed a formal release process, and the application is being used in production.
- Phase 3, Preparing for Change: Applications are in production, well-adopted, and well-supported. Design and development is stable, and programs are generally looking to the next generation of the application. The application may be nearing the end of its useful life.

Facet: Resources

In order to launch, grow, and thrive, OSS programs need resources both human and fiscal. Human resources encompass engineers writing code, community members providing use cases, or organizational homes with fiscal stewardship. Financial resources come in and go out in a wide variety of ways - in via contributions, grants, dues, sponsorships, etc., and out via salaries, servers, overhead, etc.
Phase 1, Creating Consistency: Typically funded by a single organization, and may not have a plan for ongoing support. Staff may be grant-funded, and therefore not permanent members of the team.

Phase 2, Diversification: Programs have generally moved to distributed resourcing, and are able to meet day-to-day expenses, but may be reliant on a small number of organizations and have trouble funding out-of-the-norm expenses.

Phase 3, Stable, but not Static: Generally have diverse staff support and income streams covering daily operations, and can focus on long-range strategy. Money is available for R&D, and programs have paid staff and a strong contributor model.

Facet: Community Engagement

The community engagement facet reflects efforts to facilitate and foster engagement within a community. It is focused on encouraging users to become stakeholders. A component of this facet also includes communication and outreach efforts to the community itself as well as the wider world of decision makers, potential users, funding agencies, and others.

Phase 1, Beyond Initial Stakeholders: Programs are generally focused on primary stakeholders, and have a lack of engagement with the broader cultural and scientific heritage community. Staff resources are limited, and focused on core set-up rather than engagement.

Phase 2, Establishing Infrastructure: Programs participants determine how to facilitate engagement; however, the community may be small and unsure how to participate.

Phase 3, Evolving Engagement: Programs have a well-established infrastructure to enable participation. They provide a variety of opportunities to engage, and have diverse representation.

3. For each facet, review the available activities and choose which you'd like to complete with your program. The activities are designed to help you move from your current phase to the next one.

   - Governance activities
   - Technology activities
   - Resources activities
   - Community Engagement activities

4. Determine a timeline for conducting the activities.

5. Complete the activities with your program stakeholders.

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 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 ITAVIP users 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.