

Task Force on Research Engagement Development Proposal

General Information

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| Task Force Name: | TF-RED: Task Force on Research Engagement Development |
| Brief Description: | TF-RED proposes to formalize an existing collaboration of NRENs working together to develop methods for engaging researchers and collaborations nationally and internationally, through a set of reports, workshops, and best practices. The scope of the task force focuses on collaboration between the participating NRENs, who then work within their own countries to engage their research support offices and collaborations. The TF aims to develop a framework for research engagement amongst the participating NREN community, and other research infrastructures. The results of the task force will yield documentation for other NRENs to develop their own form of research engagement, which will benefit the various research domains across Europe, and communicate and strengthen collaboration with other e-infrastructures. |
| Chair: | Sylvia Kuijpers (SURFnet) Jakob Tendel (DFN) - co-chair David Salmon (JISC) - co-chair Kate Petersen (ESnet) - co-chair Jim Bottum (Internet2) - co-chair |
| Secretary: | Charlie van Genuchten, SURFnet |
| Topics / Keywords: | Research engagement, research community, collaboration, research support |
| Supporting NRENs: | SURFnet, DFN, JISC, GEANT, ESnet, Internet2. |
| Support (Others): | Jan Bot, SURFsara (Dutch National Supercomputing facility) |
| Initial Charter Period: | 2 years |
| Mailing list | tf-red@lists.geant.org |

Why Research Engagement?

Research engagement is about enabling the effective use of technology by researchers and research collaborations. From a networking perspective, research engagement involves helping researchers use networks to improve their use of computing, data, and facilities. More specifically, research engagement works with local research support offices on how to engage with and support the researchers directly connected with their network and campuses. However, this kind of collaboration does not exist in some cases and bad user experiences, especially over long distances, are oftentimes attributed to substandard R&E networking service, leading to sub-optimal use of the high-performance infrastructure.

Exploiting the full potential of the research and education networks (RENs) for ground breaking transnational Research and Education (R&E) requires a deep and holistic understanding of all the technologies from end-user workflows down to the network hardware. By building collaborations between research support offices and NRENs, it is possible to work towards helping researchers and end users adopt technological innovations in network and compute resources, through pilot projects and increased communication, so NRENs can better understand the current and future needs of researchers.

This TF proposes participation of an interdisciplinary group of research engagers drawing from and collaborating with subject matter experts in the R&E community to generate case studies and lessons learned through a set of reports, workshops, and best practices, creating an R&E networking knowledge base. One of the desired outcomes for the task force is to create an open, two-way communication and promote collaboration between the RENs and their constituents.

Aims

The task force aims to develop a framework for research engagement through a set of reports, workshops, and best practices to help participating NRENs support their research communities. This will result in

1. Increasing our understanding of science workflows (beyond the “usual suspects” such as high-energy physics);
2. Gathering and sharing information, which can be used to improve network architecture and design;
3. Understanding what is important to users so that NRENs can be more responsive to user needs;
4. Building a body of knowledge about research applications as correlated to network utilization, which can be cited in interactions with larger community and policy efforts.

The task force is open to anyone to participate and we will seek collaboration with other infrastructures (such as Elixir, Clarin, EPOS, ELI, ESS, EUDAT, EGI, PRACE etc.), but also other projects (European Open Science Cloud) with respect to research engagement efforts as a framework is developed within the NREN community.

Byproducts of TF-RED will include

- Supporting research collaborations that want to collaborate internationally;
- Establishing a continuous and permanent information flow between RENS and Science and Research communities;
- Coordinating reliable, predictable network behavior in support of end-user applications;
- Improving performance of network-centric and data-centric workflows.

Work Items

Work item responsibilities will be divided up among the community representatives and will report back to the task force by the estimated time. Estimated timeframes are subject to change pending TF community input.

| Activity Classification | Work Items and Descriptions | Results or Deliverables | Estimated Start Time | Estimated Time for Completion |
|--|--|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Audience Definition and Scoping Phase (Activity Leader: Sylvia) | * Define audiences for NREN/ICT/local research support offices perspective. | * Internal documentation and scoping for TF collaborators and NREN community. | Q1 2017 | Q1 2017 |
| | * Define research areas or communities (i.e., life sciences, climate, humanities, etc.) for TF collaborators. Extract from these defined areas research champions/advocates. | * Create research advisory council for the TF from participating NREN countries. | Q1 2017 | Q3 2017 |
| | * Communicate TF-RED initiatives to influential funders and/or research officials. | | Q2 2017 | ongoing |

Final

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| Investigation and Data Gathering Phase (Activity Leaders: David Salmon and Jakob Tendel) | * Select approx. 5 partner NRENs to participate in gathering network/organization-related data | * Publish report sharing findings and results with the international community regarding RED. | Q2 2017 | Q4 2017 |
| | Create contact list of other infrastructures with brief description and collaboration opportunities | * List of contacts | | |
| Analysis and Reporting Phase (Activity Leader: Vincenzo Capone, Sylvia as back-up) | * Work with SIG Marcomms to define mechanisms to publish the outcomes from TF-RED. | * Public website presence. | Q1 2017 | ongoing |
| | * Community presentations to research domain peers and NREN community presentations to share outcomes. | * Workshop(s) and planned conference sessions (at DI4R, ISC, SC, ICT Open) with e-infrastructure collaborators on materials and issues ultimately increasing the value and face of R&E to other infrastructure resources. | TBC | ongoing |

More Information

A temporary mailing list was created to organize the initial work for the proposal and to give updates (tf-red@lists.geant.org Link to subscribe to the list: <https://lists.geant.org/sympa/subscribe/tf-red>). Currently, the mailing list has 70+ members.

A side meeting at TNC16 has been held (<https://tnc16.geant.org/core/event/56>) as a pre-commencement face-to-face meeting to discuss the foundations for the proposed Task Force, and a living document has been created for people to share information and initial thoughts (<https://goo.gl/GcbC5p>).

Collaborations

TF-RED is complementary to some existing SIGs, TFs, and other programs.

- Many of the contributors to this task force have been active participants in steering the Enlighten Your Research Program. We are looking to continue this effort/initiative as part of the task force.
- The eduPERT group has a long history of successful performance engineering work. We envision TF-RED complementing the PMV SIG in at least two ways: first, TF-RED can identify user communities which are in need of the tools and assistance that the PMV SIG (a.k.a., eduPERT) provides; and second, TF-RED can make ICT organizations and science communities more aware of the tools and capabilities that eduPERT provides. We have also discussed the possibility of having a combined or co-located meeting each year.
- TF-RED can provide examples of successful research engagement activities to the SIG Marcomms which can be disseminated by the Marcomms for further publicity and successes for the REN community. Also, TF-RED can work with the Communications and Outreach group to leverage their expertise when communicating with ICT organizations and other institutional entities. We gave a remote presentation about the proposed task force at the SIG Marcomms meeting in Tallinn, 29 September 2016.

Final

- SIG MSP has research engagement on their proposed topics list for future meetings. We discussed the possibilities for co-organizing the meeting about this topic and we attended their meeting in Rome on 12-13 October 2016.
- At the Digital Infrastructures for Research Conference (DI4R), we have organized a successful session (<http://www.digitalinfrastructures.eu/content/research-engagement-across-e-infrastructures-towards-integrated-approach>), which discusses many of the topics this task force would like address.

This is not an exclusive list of collaborations. We will want to engage with other initiatives as the opportunities arise.

Final

Annex 1: Standard Terms of Reference

1. Task Forces are established under the auspices of the GÉANT Community Programme to provide a forum for exchanging and promoting ideas, experience and knowledge, as well as fostering collaborations among National Research and Education Networks and academic and research institutions.
2. The Task Forces focus activity predominantly in Europe. Each Task Force will collaborate with organisations outside the European area or on a broader scope with relevant initiatives whenever opportunities for collaboration arise that support the aims of the Task Force.
3. The Chair of the Task Force will be responsible for preparing the agenda of each meeting and for co-ordinating the work of the Task Force. S/he will also be responsible for the agreed deliverables being produced. Additional work item leaders will support the chair in ensuring the smooth operation of the Task Force and in preparing the agenda for specific or ad-hoc sub-group meetings, whenever they are deemed necessary.
4. The secretary of the Task Force will be appointed by GÉANT. S/he will be responsible for managing membership of the mailing list or lists, maintaining and publishing information on the web site, taking the minutes at each meeting and for making the necessary logistical arrangements.
5. The Task Force will operate with a two-year mandate. At the end of the two-year period, the GÉANT Community Committee (GCC) may recommend to renew the mandate of the Task Force. If the mandate is not renewed, the Task Force will be dissolved. The Task Force may also be dissolved if the GCC considers that it is making insufficient progress or that its activities are no longer useful or relevant, or if the Task Force chair resigns and no replacement can be found.
6. The Task Force will be open to any individual who can offer appropriate expertise, manpower, equipment or services. Participation will be on a voluntary basis.
7. The Task Force will meet at approximately four-monthly intervals (facilities for remote participation will be made available). Physical meetings will be held at various locations, taking care to reduce overall costs to participants.
8. Reports and other results of the Task Force shall be placed in the public domain, with the exception of sensitive information.
9. The Task Force will have a mailing list for communication between the participants. The mailing list archive will be publicly available. Separate mailing lists may exist for specific work items or sub-tasks.