N8 CIR Project Working Group - Terms of reference

Background

The strategy of the N8 Centre of Excellence in Computationally Intensive Research (N8-CIR) focuses on the creation of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in CIR methods, skills and facilities to underpin the strategic research objectives of the N8 universities. The strategy aims to provide a competitive edge, extending the boundaries of the possible by:

- building communities of practice focused on selected N8 strategic research priorities
- developing skills, including building a communities of research infrastructure engineers and research software engineers
- developing shared software infrastructure to support research priorities and cross-cutting capabilities
- facilitating the provision of shared high-performance and high-throughput computing resources involving N8 partners
- facilitating access to the national e-Infrastructure ecosystem
- positioning N8 to leverage future funding for CIR

The CoE will accelerate progress in areas of research that are of strategic importance to the N8 partners, including some that have not made heavy use of computational resources in the past.

A steering group provides strategic direction to the program, which is overseen by the N8 Strategic Executive Group (N8-SEG). An executive/project Directors group (N8-HPC PDG) exists to manage the project on a day to day basis on behalf of the steering group.

An understanding of the broad landscape will provide a basis for identifying cross-cutting capability (software tools, methodology, expertise, infrastructure) that could benefit multiple areas. For each selected theme a research roadmap will be developed, identifying key opportunities for CIR to accelerate progress, proposing a joint programme of work, and building a community of practice.

Definition

The Project Working Group (N8-CIR PWG) consists of appropriate expert representatives from the partner organisations sufficient to draw together common strands across the diverse strands of activity within the research themes to derive technical, infrastructure, software and people/skills roadmaps that underpin the delivery of the themes.

Membership

The PWG will be chaired by the Technical Director. Meetings will usually be attended by one representative per site, together with the Programme Manager, Technical Directors and the RSE lead. Additional experts will be invited to participate in the group from time to time, should the need arise.

Meeting frequency

The group will meet quarterly, synchronised with the N8-CIR Steering Group. One meeting per year may be of extended membership (i.e. not limited to one representative per site).

Communications

An email list will be used for group communications, minutes of the meeting will be made available and a verbal update given to the steering group.

Aims

The PWG has the following aims:

- To support the Steering Group's development of research roadmaps for the agreed themes through the identification of strands of activity that can be underpinned in similar ways & highlight potential quick-wins back to the Steering Group.
- To propose technical, infrastructure, software and people/skills developments that underpin the strategic research priorities of the N8 partners.
- To assist the Steering Group respond to funding opportunities that further the aims of N8-CIR.
- To facilitate a community of practice for the sharing of experience and the state of practice in supporting computationally intensive research.
- To support the building of communities of practice and provide a link between those that exist within organisations to those which are built across the partnership.
- To combine positions of leverage (e.g. buying power) to enable activities within complementary parts of the programme (e.g. software/skills development).
- To share experience of the use of new/emerging technologies in research.
- To act jointly, where appropriate, to create critical mass that positions N8-CIR favourably towards investment (e.g. funding, training opportunities, access to technologies).

Example activities

Examples of activities which the PWG provides direct benefit include:

- Acting as a focal point for the coordination of National HPC training within the region.
- Proof-of-concept development, e.g. execution of workloads on cloud infrastructures.
- Identification and proposal for the development of common software tools.
- Proposal for networking or training activities around particular methods/technologies.
- Providing technical input to support responses to National e-Infrastructure funding calls.
- Share experiences of providing user support to further the state of practice and identify joint training or infrastructure needs.
- Link hardware and software purchases to leverage joint training opportunities for RIEs and RSEs.