

Communities of Practice and the ARDC

Social infrastructure is equally important and rewarding as digital infrastructure

Purposeful practice

Communities of practice (CoP) bring value to organisations as they are a bottom up approach that collectively accelerates the development of community agreed standards. For the ARDC these CoPs are fundamental to developing shared infrastructures and enabling interoperability.

This poster illustrates the importance of sensitively managing ARDC-facilitated CoPs and outlines a procedure that ensures consistency and alignment with the ARDC's strategy.



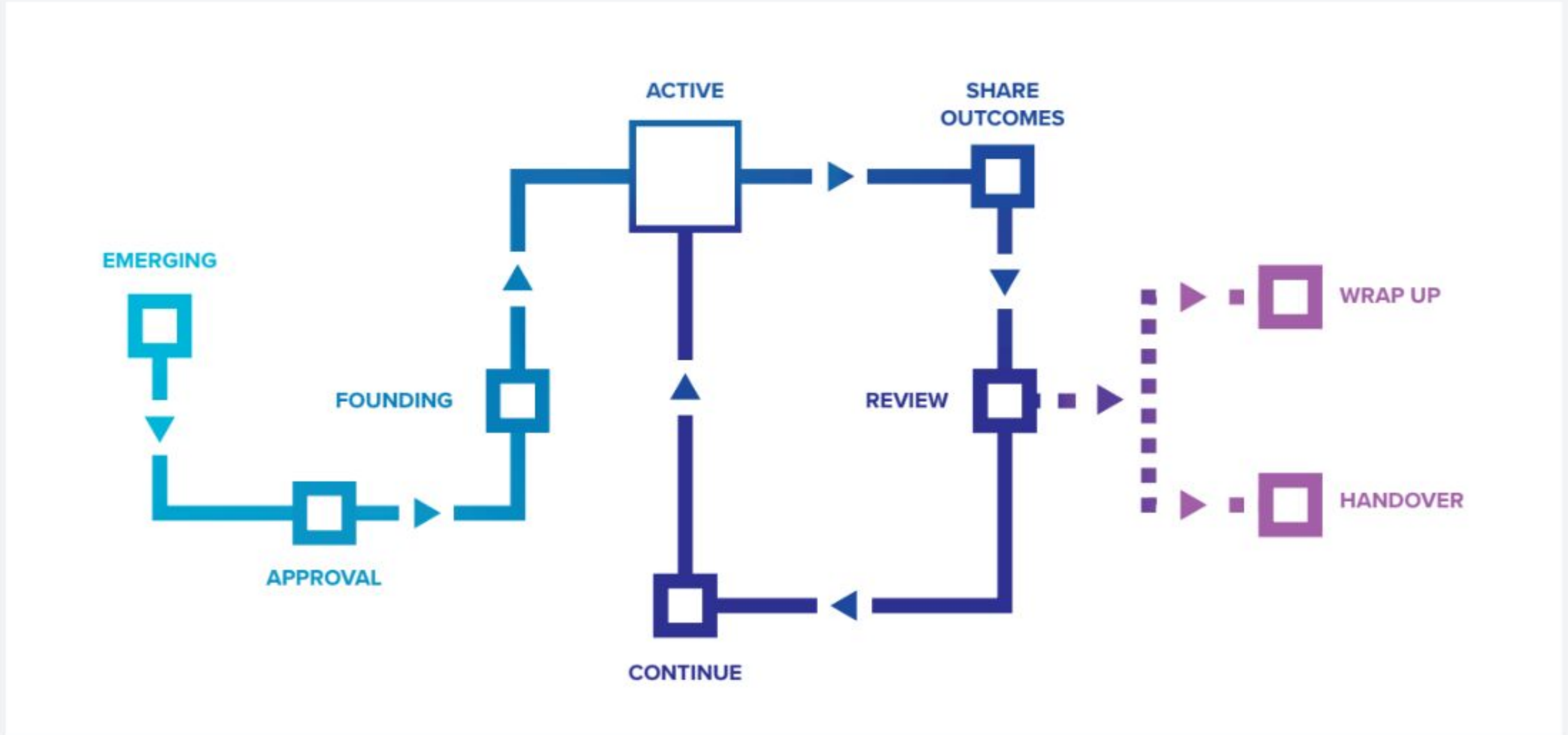
As a waterhole sustains a diverse ecosystem, so too may communities of practice achieve more through collaboration than the sum of individual effort.

Calibrating shared goals

Instead of a progressive series of steps characterised as “waterfall” project management methodology, we take a lifecycle approach to reflect the natural ebb and flow of shared community endeavour. By expecting change, our process provides a consistent and effective approach across the ARDC for initiating, engaging with, and discontinuing communities. This enables the ARDC to easily monitor the impact of our involvement across a range of communities, and ensures balanced decisions on agreed communities to support. Thus, clarity on shared goals provides the basis for consistent, high quality engagement with community partners.

For the ARDC to understand the changes needed in the management of its facilitated CoPs, it is necessary to periodically evaluate their alignment with the ARDC's focus areas: thematic Research Data Commons, Translational Research Data Challenges, Nectar Research Cloud, National Information Infrastructure and digital research skills.

PHASES IN A COMMUNITY LIFECYCLE



Applying a lifecycle approach helps to achieve clarity and manage expectations around community goals, required resourcing and plans for sustainability. It provides structure in founding and managing a community and provides a mechanism to wrap up or hand over communities.

Validating collaboration

Members of our communities of practice also need to be able to see themselves reflected and validated in our collaborations. This includes sharing appreciation as a valued part of the group identity, and by giving recognition in the outputs which members strive for and deliver. These activities affirm a sense of belonging in the resulting network of relationships which are sustained by collective endeavour.

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Linking vision and strategy in a practicable cycle

Fostering facilitators

An internal CoP of community facilitators supports processes for fostering emerging CoPs as well as the community review cycle, by enabling skill building, inter-group support and knowledge exchange. This vision of community management strategy can be implemented by other groups. Ask us how!

Further reading
Australian Research Data Commons. (2025). ARDC Communities Strategy (Version 1). Zenodo.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15186798>

With thanks to all our community partners, the ARDC Community Facilitators Group, and ARDC Alumni Ian Duncan & Tom Honeyman.



Successful community facilitation can mimic the metamorphosis of the tadpole-to-frog life cycle. Mature frogs can hop into new ponds.