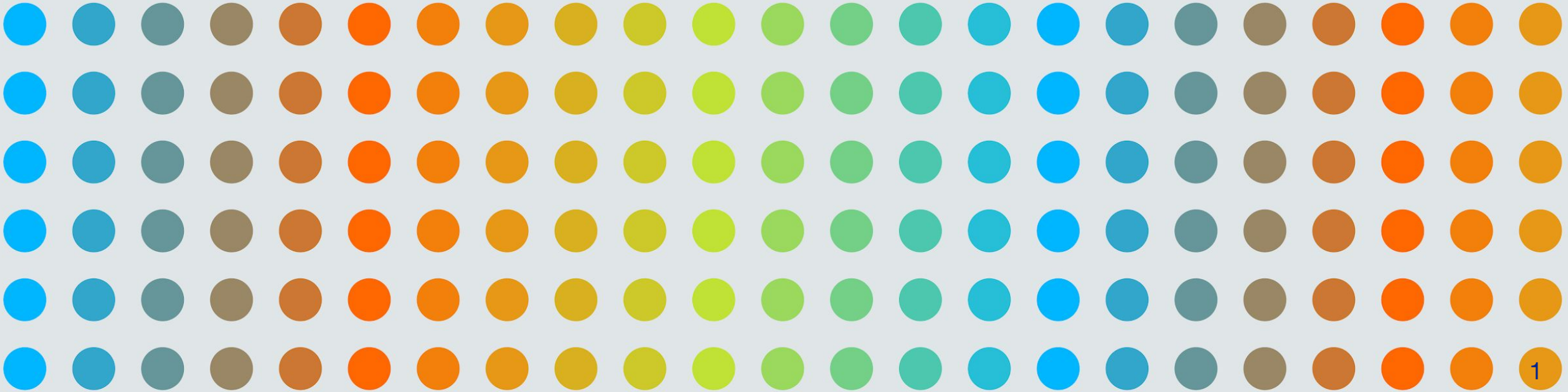
Volunteering Data Standards Working Group

10 December 2025



Contents

Welcome

Notices

This meeting will be recorded.

Chatham House Rule - please don’t use note-taking apps.

Inform the chair or secretariat if you think there is a risk of:

1. Conflicts of Interest: A personal or professional interest that might have undue or improper influence on a decision made in this meeting.

2. Engaging in anti-competitive activities: We must not discuss pricing, market sharing, or other matters that could be perceived to restrict competition.

3. Misuse of Intellectual Property: Concerns about how your contributions or ideas are being or could be used.

Working together

1. Every voice matters.
2. Please join the conversation, we don’t want this to be one way.
3. If you’re happy to, keep your camera on.
4. Please raise your hand if you want to come in, or drop your ideas in the chat.
5. Respect the diverse viewpoints in the room, assume positive intent and remain open to different perspectives and experiences.
6. We will be using Miro to support our discussions today.

Facilitation tools

We will use Miro today…

- Free, no sign up required, works in most browsers and most organisations.
- Big screen is better.
- We will walk you through the activities.

If you can’t use Miro please contribute to discussions and share your thoughts in the meeting chat.

The miro board will be accessible after the meeting in ‘View and Comment’ mode.

Project Overview

Project Team

open data institute

Sector technology partners

Doit

TeamKinetic

Funded by

Department for Culture Media & Sport

Real world testing (Beta)

THE BIG HELP OUT

Plus the thousands of organisations that work with volunteers!

Why is ODI interested in volunteering?

Image generated by Gemini

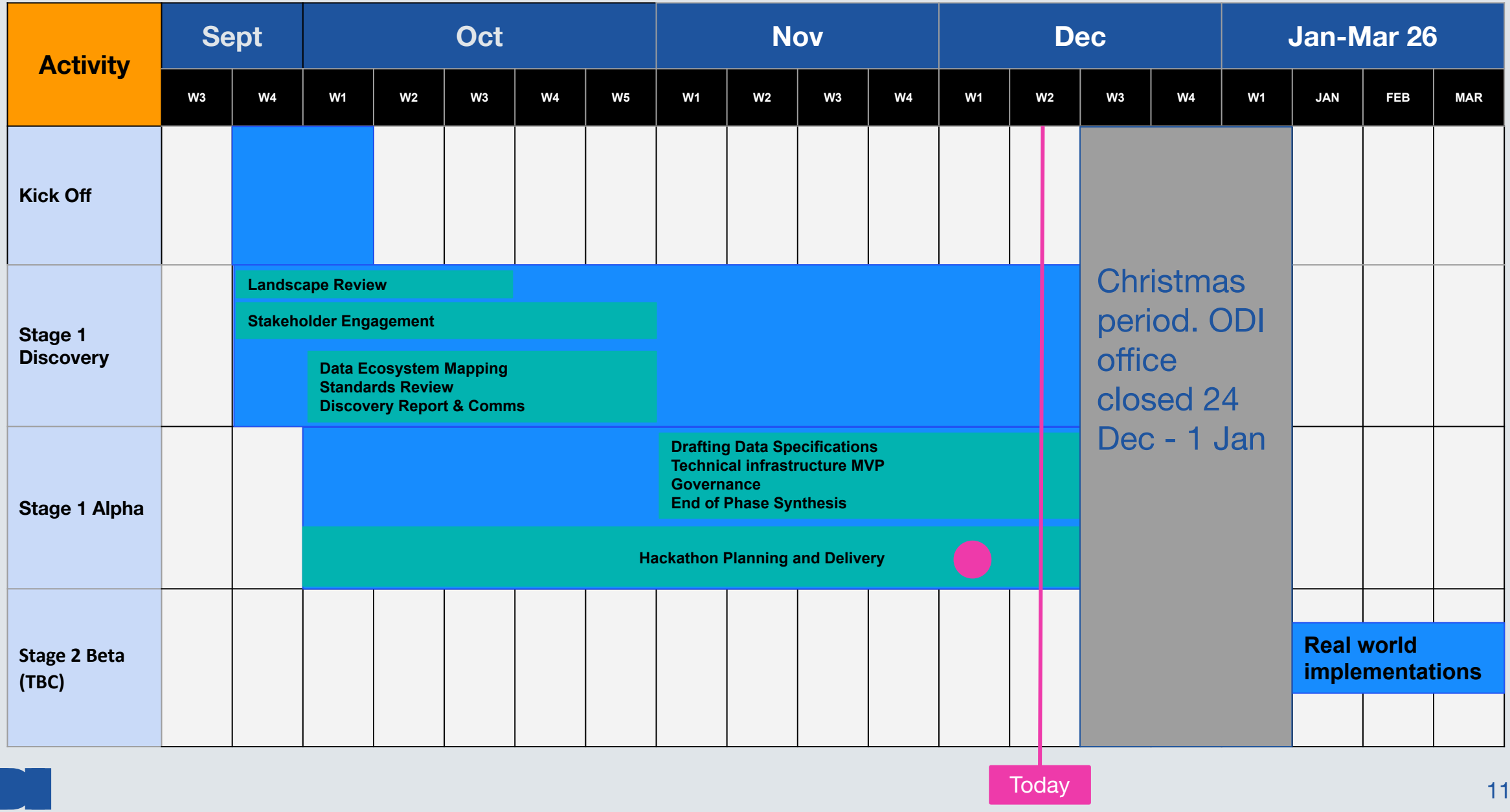
Develop a modern, open, data infrastructure for volunteering to:

Power Innovation & increase impact

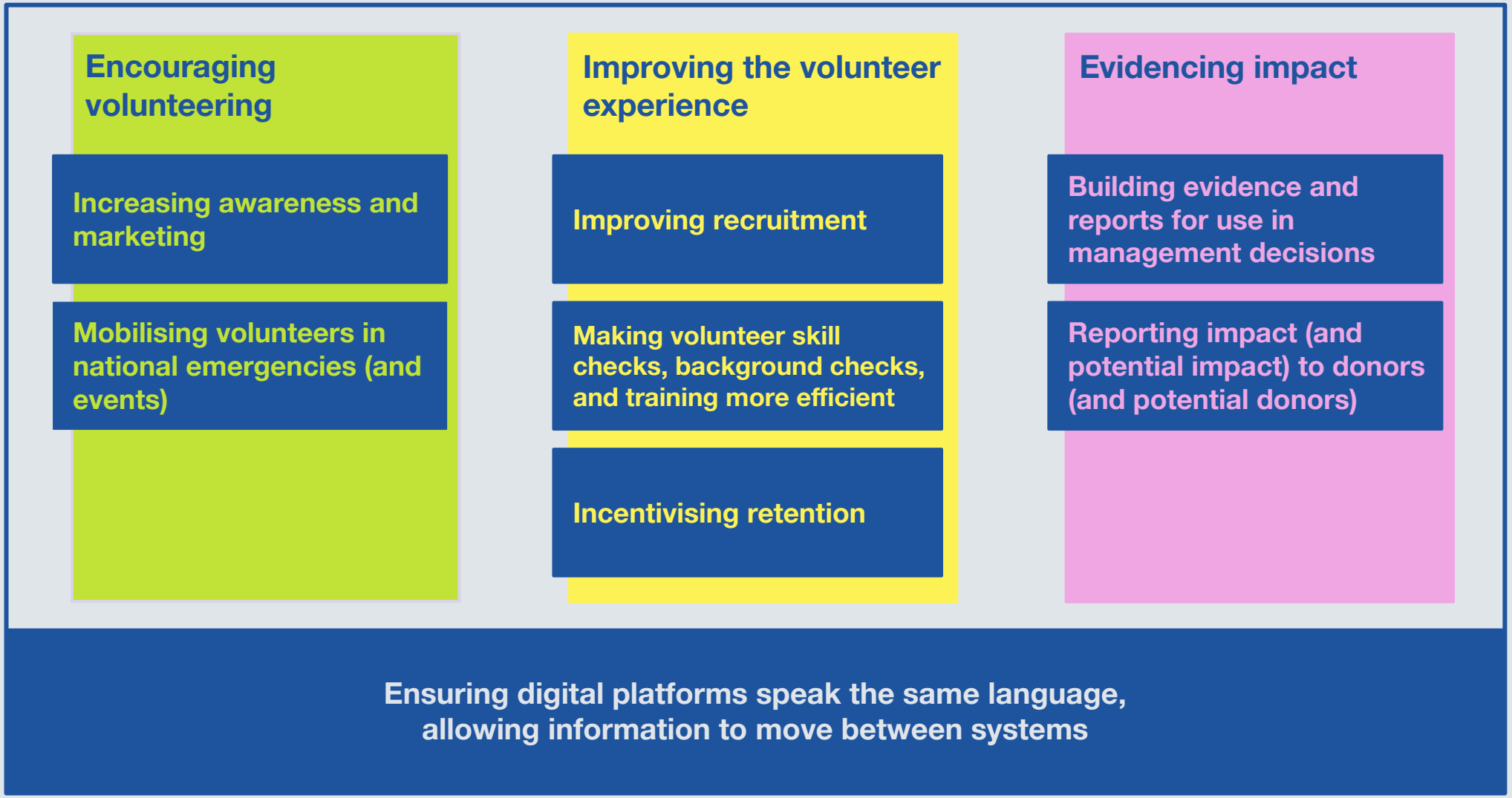
Enable data sharing

Build a data culture

Timeline


Activity
Sept
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan-Mar 26
W3
W4
W1
W2
W3
W4
W5
W1
W2
W3
W4
W1
W2
W3
W4
W1
JAN
FEB
MAR
Kick Off
Stage 1 Discovery
Landscape Review
Stakeholder Engagement
Data Ecosystem Mapping
Standards Review
Discovery Report & Comms
Stage 1 Alpha
Drafting Data Specifications
Technical infrastructure MVP
Governance
End of Phase Synthesis
Hackathon Planning and Delivery
Stage 2 Beta (TBC)
Real world implementations
Christmas period. ODI office closed 24 Dec - 1 Jan
Today

Use Cases

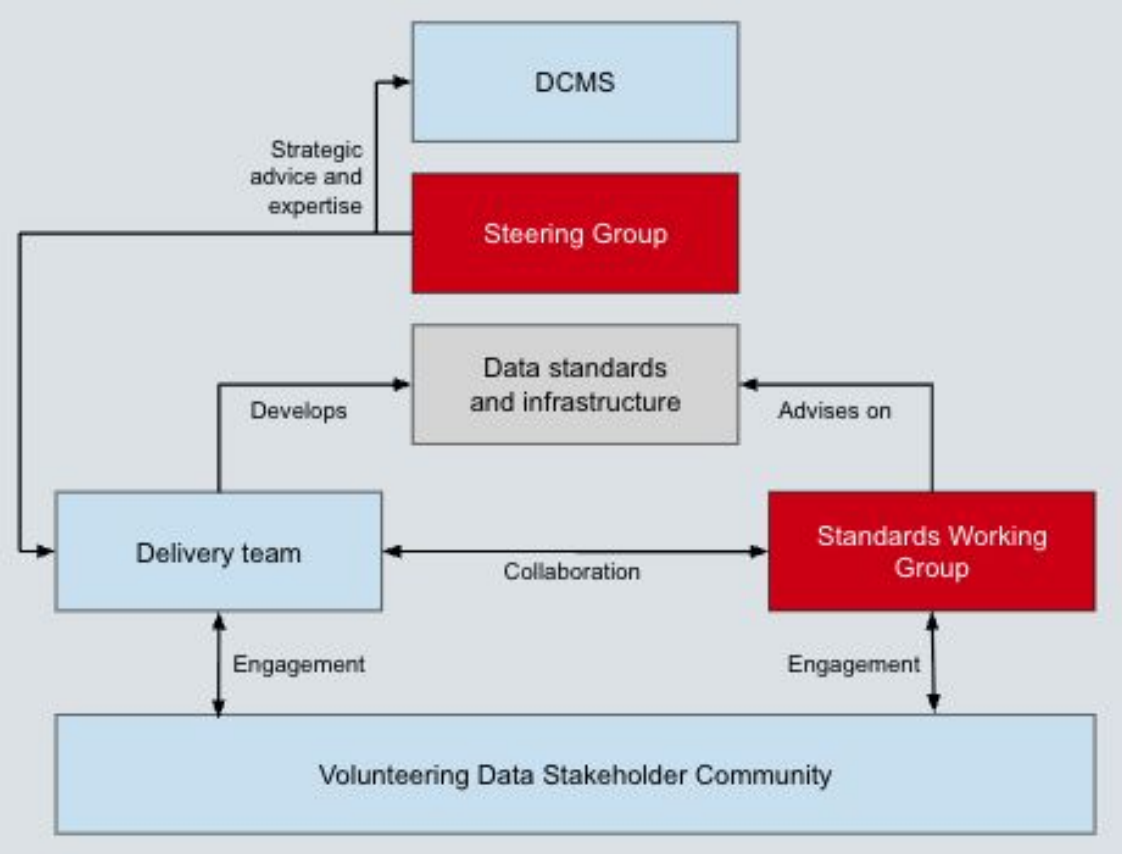

Encouraging volunteering
Increasing awareness and marketing
Mobilising volunteers in national emergencies (and events)
Improving the volunteer experience
Improving recruitment
Making volunteer skill checks, background checks, and training more efficient
Incentivising retention
Evidencing impact
Building evidence and reports for use in management decisions
Reporting impact (and potential impact) to donors (and potential donors)
Ensuring digital platforms speak the same language, allowing information to move between systems

The Standards Working Group

A community of subject matter experts including: Thematic experts, data experts and software providers collaborating to agree standards.

Ensuring standards and infrastructure are developed that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Terms of Reference



Alpha

November - December

Purpose
To test the feasibility of introducing a common open data standard for volunteering opportunities.

Objectives

- Design a draft open data standard to support interoperability between volunteering platforms, leveraging existing solutions where relevant to enhance sustainability. ✓
- Develop a minimum viable technical infrastructure to enable data collection, sharing and use. ✓
- Test the data standard and infrastructure through collaborative experimentation and feedback. ✓
- Begin to establish the early governance model, stewardship options and stakeholder alignment. ✓

Alpha is where you try out different solutions to the problems you learnt about during discovery.

Hackathon

About the hackathon

- 3/4 December, London
- Attendees
  - Day 1 - 32 attendees
  - Day 2 - 28 attendees
- Representing
  - Volunteer Involving Organisations
  - Volunteering System Organisations
  - System Vendors
  - Students / Graduates
- A huge range of knowledge and skills

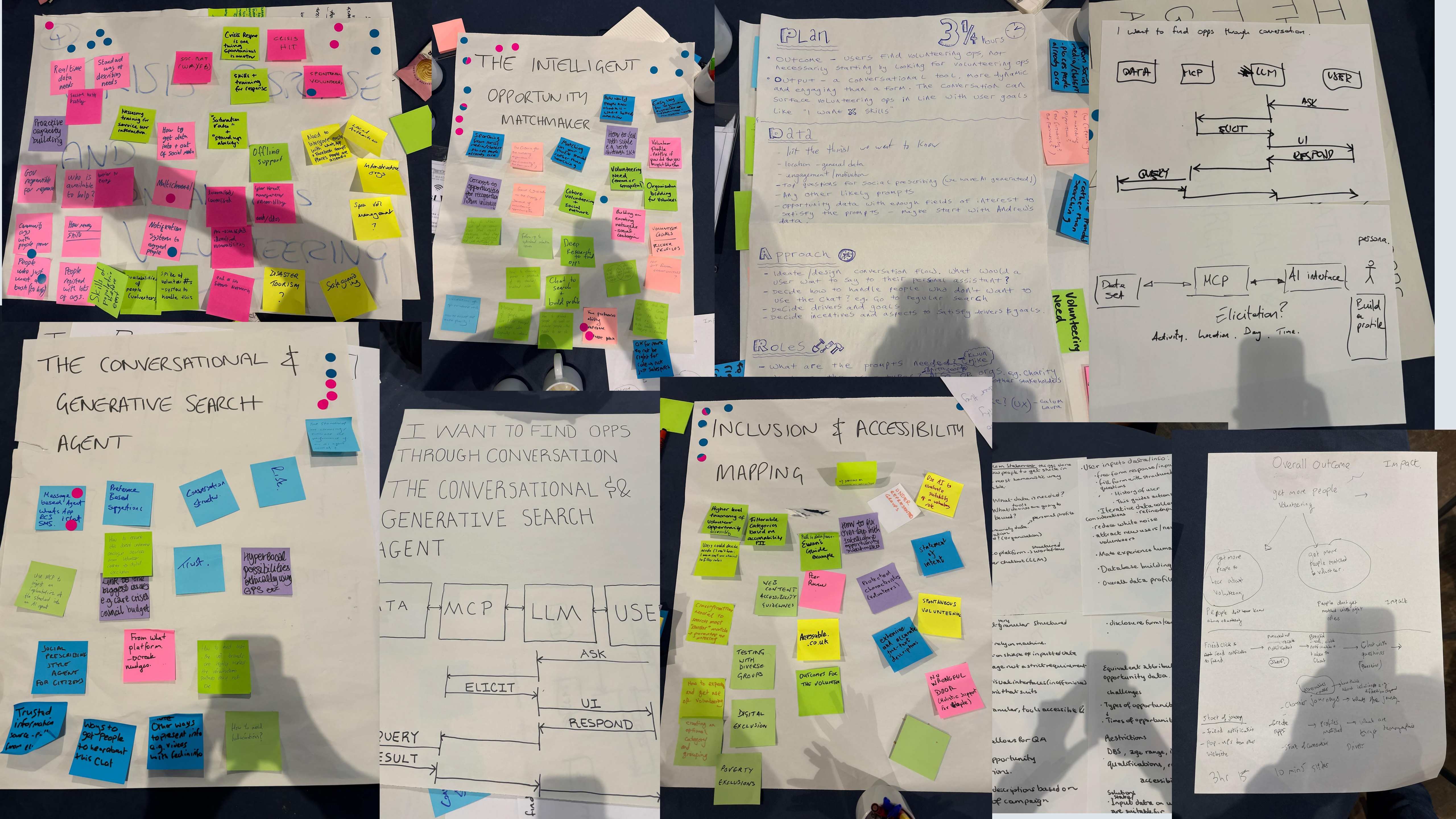
User-centric discovery and experience

To prototype novel tools and interfaces that use standardised opportunity data to solve key user problems, demonstrating the tangible value of a connected data ecosystem.

What we'd like to test
The intelligent opportunity matchmaker: How can we use standardised data to move beyond simple keyword search?
The conversational and generative search agent: Can finding a volunteer role be as easy as asking a friend?
Inclusion and accessibility mapping: How can we use data to broaden reach and ensure no one is excluded?
Crisis response and spontaneous volunteering: How can this data infrastructure be rapidly deployed in an emergency (eg, a flood)?

System interoperability and data pipeline

To pressure-test the draft Volunteering Data Standard by building practical data pipelines and API integrations. The outcomes will directly inform the Beta phase, identifying blockers and proving the standard's real-world viability.


Crisis Response and Volunteering
Crisis Hit
Spontaneous volunteers
Real time data needs
Standard ways of describing needs
Skills + training for response
Proactive capacity building
Offline support
Infrastructure orgs
Who is available to help?
Multichannel
How many skills
Notification system to engaged people
People who just want to bash (to help)
People registered with lots of orgs.
Disaster tourism ?
Safeguarding
THE INTELLIGENT OPPORTUNITY MATCHMAKER
Volunteering Need
Volunteer goals
Richer profiles
Deep research to find opps
Chat to search build profile
Cohort volunteering + social network
Organisation bidding for volunteers
Plan
3¼ hours
Outcome – users find volunteering ops, not necessarily starting by looking for volunteering ops
Output – a conversational tool, more dynamic and engaging than a form. The conversation can surface volunteering ops in line with user goals like "I want X skills"
Data
Approach
Roles
I want to find opps through conversation.
DATA
MCP
LLM
USER
ASK
ELICIT
UI
RESPOND
QUERY
persona
Data set
MCP
AI interface
Elicitation?
Activity. Location. Day. Time.
Build a profile
THE CONVERSATIONAL & GENERATIVE SEARCH AGENT
Message based Agent WhatsApp RCS SMS. Chat
Preference Based Suggestions
Conversation structure
Trust.
Hyperlocal possibilities ethically using GPS etc
From what platform. – break nudges.
Social prescribing style agent for citizens
Trusted information source
Ways to get people to hear about this chat
Other ways to present info e.g. videos
I WANT TO FIND OPPS THROUGH CONVERSATION
THE CONVERSATIONAL && GENERATIVE SEARCH AGENT
MCP
LLM
USE
ASK
ELICIT
UI
RESPOND
INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY MAPPING
Filterable categories based on accessibility
Statement of intent
Peer review
Protected characteristics (volunteers)
Web content accessibility guidelines
Spontaneous volunteering
Accessable.co.uk
Testing with diverse groups
Outcomes for the volunteer
No wrongful door
Digital exclusion
Poverty exclusions
Overall outcome
Impact
get more people volunteering
get more people to hear about volunteering
get more people matched to volunteer
3hr 15
10 mins slides

What the teams did…

1. The intelligent opportunity matchmaker

- Team Table One focused on a humanistic search experience, using natural language to capture a volunteer's passions, constraints, and accessibility needs.
- They proposed an AI training framework requiring insights into the volunteer's purpose, background, skills, and needs.
- The multi-channel platform, accessible via services like Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp, allows users to engage comfortably.
- A functioning prototype was provided.

2. The conversational and generative search agent

- Team Good proposed using an open data standard and a conversational chat mode to help users find highly relevant opportunities.
- The prototyped chat service acts as a volunteer center advisor or social prescriber, understanding motivations and beneficial outcomes.
- The system moves beyond keyword search by prompting for specific information to match desires with opportunity attributes.
- Team Good also aimed to holistically assess volunteering impact using a workplace wellbeing graph to measure a volunteer's wellbeing score before and after the experience.

What the teams did…

3. Inclusion and accessibility mapping

- Team Data with Heart addressed the lack of accessibility information in volunteer role descriptions.
- They proposed an accessibility taxonomy for open standards, building on prototype data.
- A secondary project was proposed to integrate third-party data (e.g., community-sourced) for accessibility insights, reducing reliance on volunteering managers.
- They flagged that maintaining user privacy and dignity is crucial when handling personal accessibility information.

4.Crisis response

- Team Everything Everywhere All At Once focused on crisis response and spontaneous volunteering, separating the issue into two volunteer scenarios: waiting to be activated by an organisation or spontaneously showing up.
- The problem statement centered on enabling the frictionless sharing of skills/assets for crisis needs while ensuring appropriate volunteer placement, oversight, and safeguarding.
- They developed 'Open Response,' a digital solution based on principles including dynamically alerting those with mandated skills and relying on a holistic understanding of health and needs, prioritizing service users.
- A user journey for spontaneous volunteers was outlined, where they could use a QR code at the scene to check requirements and offer assistance.

And the winner was…

… The intelligent opportunity matchmaker

The judges liked the proposal because…

- The idea is innovative, using AI and citing research on conversational AI use.
- It simplifies the volunteer experience starting with simple questions (motivation, skills, location).
- The team had considered how to develop the service to: Consider impacts on individual wellbeing; or make use of the service in crisis response.
- The team provided a live model demonstration with on-screen examples using the sample opportunity data provided.

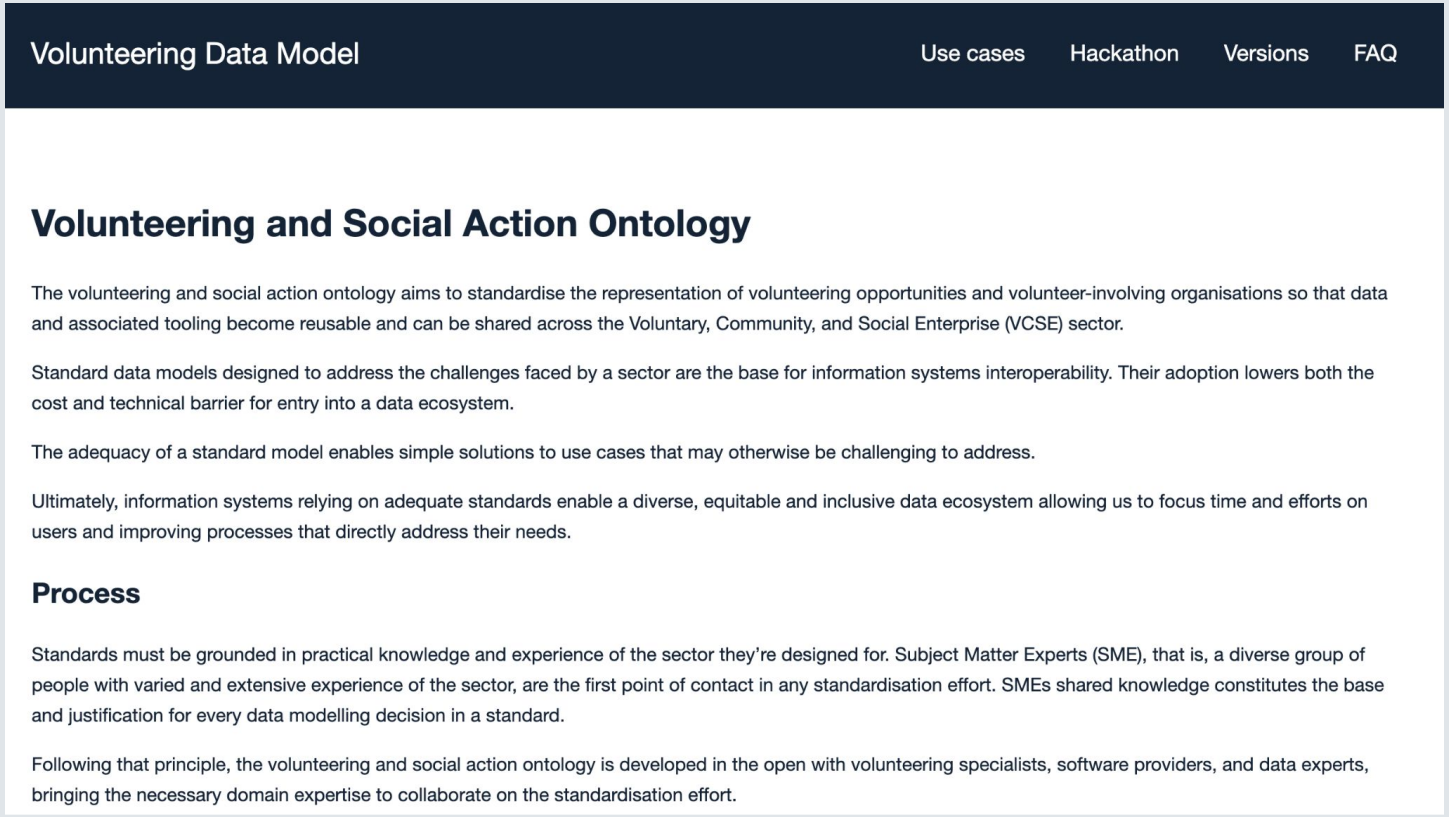
Attendee Observations...

Data Model Update

Volunteering Data Model

https://model.volunteeringdata.io/

- A public space for the standard
- Contribute your knowledge through discussions
- Raise ecosystem awareness of the working groups
- Facilitate more contributions and focused discussions
- Everyone's knowledge and expertise is welcome and needed



Considering open data - Part 2

Assumption:

Volunteering opportunity data should be open data.

Addressing restricting forces…

Safeguards

- Counter-arguments to build trust and confidence?
- Conditions that must be true for this risk to be acceptable?
- Mitigations to enable data to be made open?

ODI Data Sharing Risk Framework and Risk Assessment Tool:

- https://theodi.org/insights/guides/assessing-risk-when-sharing-data-a-guide/

Miro: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVGd58Ecw=/

Next Steps

What's Next?

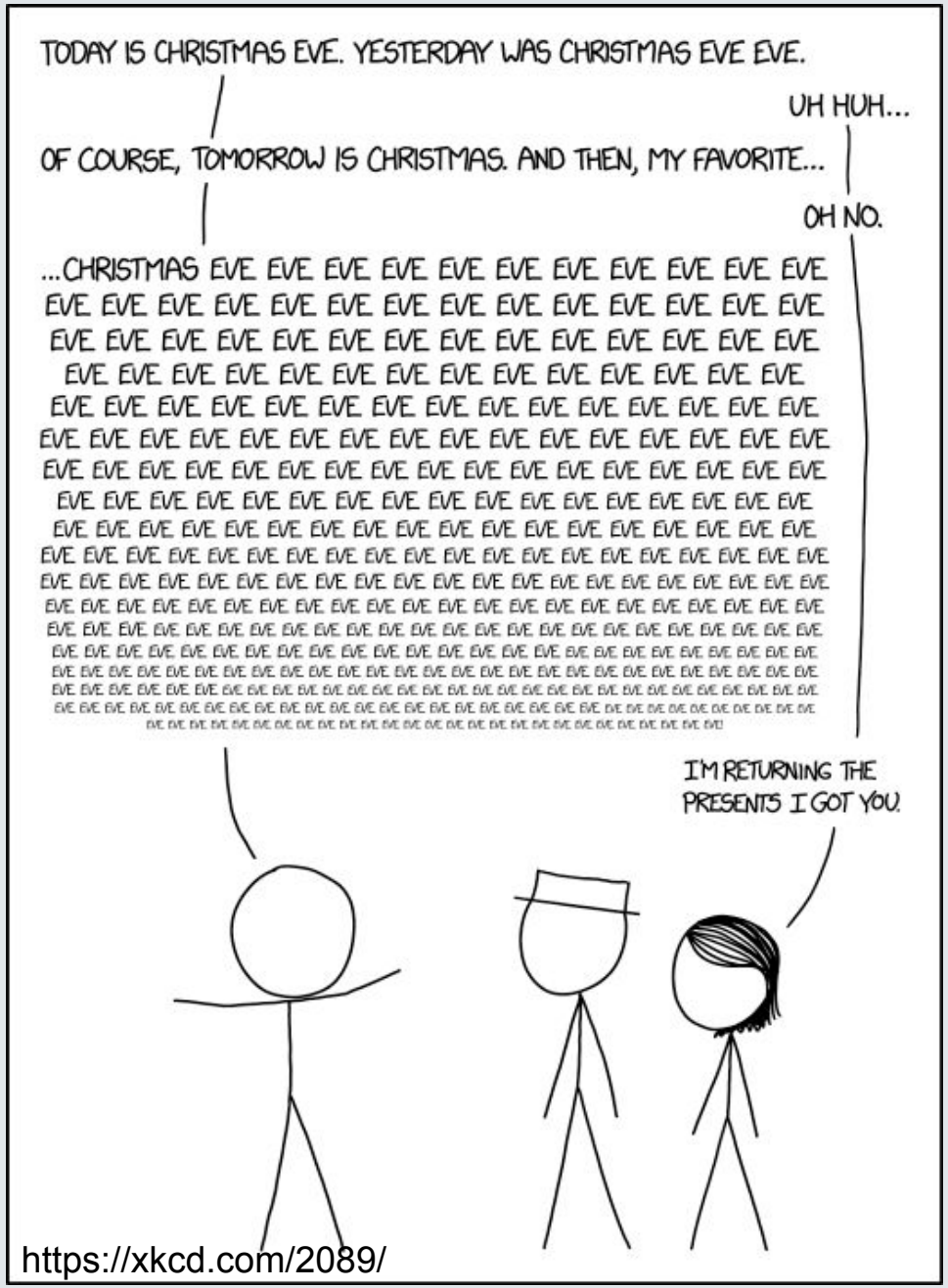
Current Sprint (4) 8/12/25 to 19/12/2025

- Third meeting of Standards Working Group to review outcomes rom hackathon
- Updates to data model and data sharing mechanisms based on learning from hackathon
- End of Alpha Report to DCMS

Christmas

Beta Phase Jan to Mar 2026

- Monthly meeting of Standards Working Group
- Real work pilots



https://xkcd.com/2089/

Thank you

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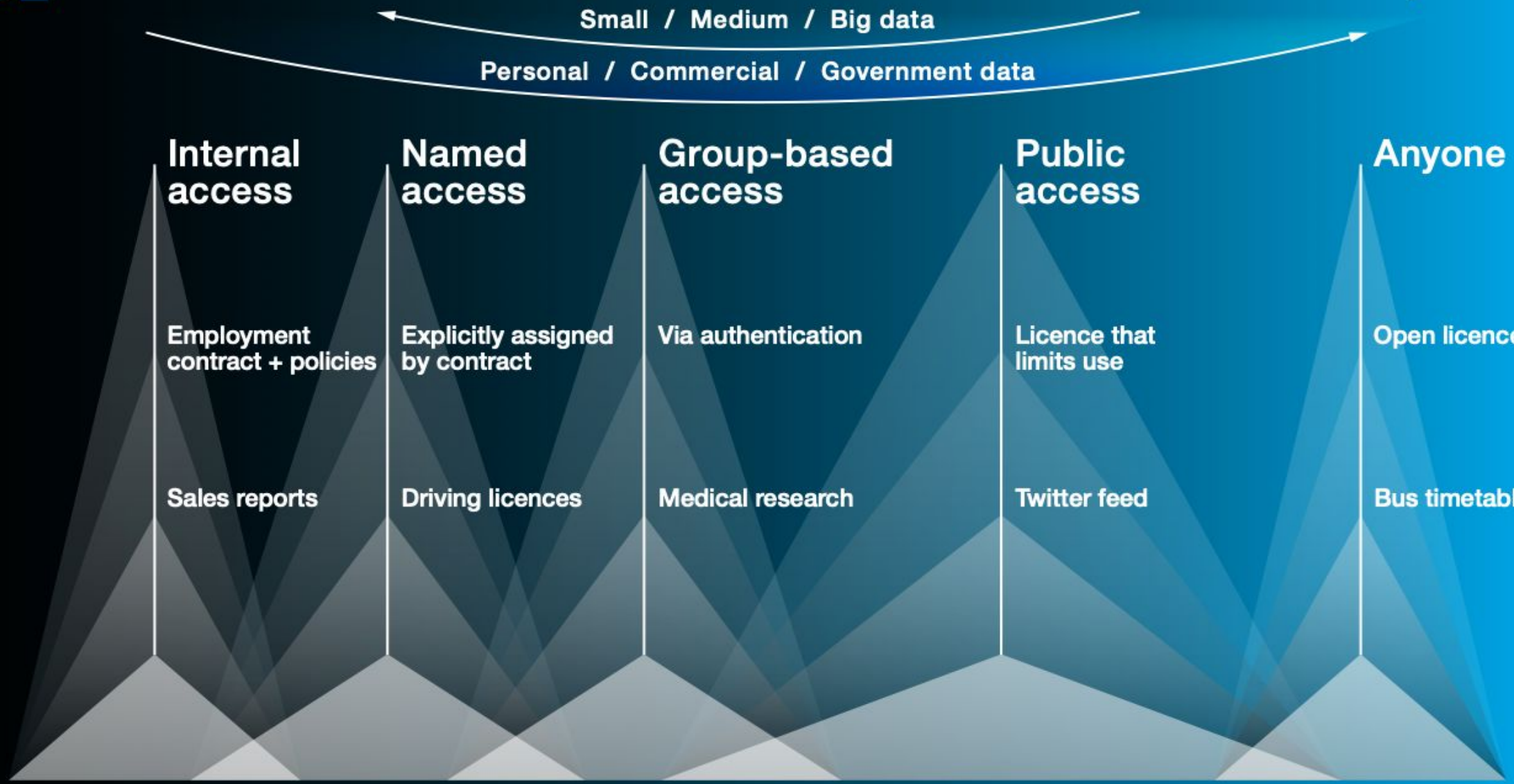
Additional Information

(not presented)

Open data is data that anyone can access, use or share.

The Data Spectrum



theodi.org/data-spectrum

Data infrastructure

The data.

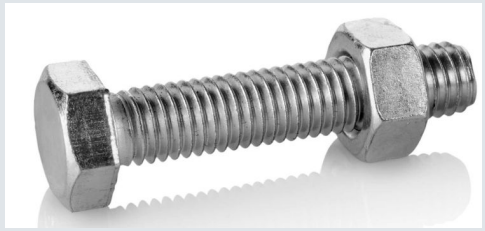
The policies and standards that define and control the data.

The technical infrastructure that provides access to the data.

The organisations and people that contribute to, and steward, these things.

Open data standards

Standards are documented, reusable agreements that solve a specific set of problems or meet clearly defined needs.



An open standards are available for anyone to access, use and share, they are developed using open processes.

One metre is the length of the path travelled by light in vacuum during a time interval with duration of 1/299 792 458 of a second (BIPM.ORG)

Open standards for data help us publish, access, share and use better quality data.