



2024

GDN Network Protocols for Working Groups, Communities of Practice and Research

*Working in partnership
to enable and support
the GDN Network
Communities' Efforts to
Inspire and Catalyze
Change.*



Contents

GDN Working Groups, Communities of Practice and Research	2
Preamble.....	2
GDN working groups.....	2
GDN Communities of practice:	4
Membership Principles	5
Membership Call Approach	6
Final Written Products	6
Questions	8



GDN Working Groups, Communities of Practice and Research

Preamble

The GDN is seeking to grow efforts to advance research and publication of thought leadership work through working groups, communities of practice and publications. There have been prior examples including the Microcredentialing paper submitted to the UN to aid advancement of definitions work, the GDN T.R.U.S.T. Hub which has won an international award through PESC, and new efforts including the regional case work for Australia (Norway and Groningen are coming soon), the recently published Interoperability paper and a soon to be published discussion document on governance. For all this work, the GDN participants are often contributors to this important work.

As we anticipate growing this type of research leadership and volunteer work, it has become necessary to make more transparent the process the GDN follows and requires when establishing working groups, communities of practice and research.

Rationale for these Protocols

The importance of rigorous consultation, research, writing and peer review when establishing working groups and communities of practice and publishing through the GDN Network is influenced by the reach of the GDN community. As an illustrative example, most written material reaches a minimum of 5,000 people with one posting and subsequent cross posting on LinkedIn, a number that continues to grow. Engagement with GDN work extends significantly beyond that reach. Therefore, the practices outlined in this document are to ensure quality and support for the GDN mission and mandate as a neutral public benefits organization guided by strict statutes and principles.

Developing and supporting working groups, communities of practice, and subsequent research and written content and initiatives that serve the mandate and goals of the GDN Network require extensive effort on the part of the Board, the GDN Support Team and the volunteer GDN community members.

The definitions, process, and other details outlined below are intended to ensure all the above is supported as we work in partnership with our GDN community to evolve the organization and support their work. The GDN also respects that volunteers who contribute to the organization serve senior roles in their organizations and communities and are extremely busy with multiple demands on their time. The GDN wishes to ensure they are supported with a transparent and principles based framework.

GDN working groups

Definition:

These are smaller groups of volunteers (no more than 8 to 10 members) who have specific expertise necessary to contribute meaningfully to the topic at hand. Their work is guided by a focused terms of



reference that has been approved by the GDN executive committee of the board with input and recommendations from the GDN executive director to ensure the intentions align with the GDN statutes and by-laws, the organization's capacities and the strategic goals of the GDN. These terms explicitly define scope, deliverables and timelines for the work of the committee to ensure quality outputs.

Membership and Terms of Reference process:

Nominations for membership and the terms of reference are approved by the GDN executive committee of the board with input, support and recommendations from the executive director. Often, advice from board and community members is sought both for the terms and for the membership of the working group. The board serves an oversight role in keeping with the GDN statutes.

Typical structure:

The roles on a working group typically include the following. While each working group may have some slight differences, the following are provided to aid those who are contemplating starting or joining one for a particular initiative. These are typical of past GDN projects.

Chairs: The chairs are responsible for managing the time and discussions in the working group meetings in meetings to ensure respectful engagement and high quality and timely achievement of the working group deliverables. Keeping the members on topic and within the defined scope of the terms of reference are critical to success. The chair(s) work directly with the executive director to advance the initiative, resolve disputes that may arise on differences of opinion, and ensure timely completion.

Writers: Generally, it is recommended that the chair(s) identify in advance who might be willing to volunteer to write the final draft product (report or blog) on behalf of the group (either from within the group or outside of the group). This helps to ensure quality, timeliness, and consistency of tone. These people, along with the chairs, will receive relevant recognition commiserate with their contributions in the final publication.

Subject Matter Experts: The rest of the working group along with the chairs and the writers are the experts in the subject at hand. The GDN executive director may also serve as one of the subject matter experts.

GDN Board Executive Committee: On behalf of the GDN Board, the Executive Committee reviews final materials prior to publication along with the executive director to ensure further support and alignment with the GDN mission. They also approve the publications prior to launch on the GDN website.

GDN Executive Director: The executive director deals with and through the working group chair to help support and manage the committee work and to ensure alignment with the priorities, statutes and principles of the GDN. This may also involve participating directly in the meetings of the working group. They will also conduct a final review of any materials produced by the working group for any final edits as a support to the Executive Committee and subsequently handle all interactions and approvals (as needed) with the GDN executive committee and board.



GDN Support team: The GDN support team will help with meeting scheduling or defer to the chair(s) if they wish to handle this as well as handle all final work to support the review/editing and approval process for the executive director and the GDN Board executive committee (or delegated research or other group should such arise). They also are responsible for designing and producing the final product for publication to the GDN website. Where resources are not available to support the committee, the chair(s) and working group members will be asked to self manage the meeting logistics.

Peer Reviewers: Generally speaking, the people on the committee serve as the initial reviewers. If the chair(s) or executive director wishes to seek additional peer reviewers, that is encouraged and welcome. These people will receive recognition in the final published report commiserate with their contributions.

Tools: The following GDN tools are available to support the group: the GDN scheduling calendar, a GDN Listserv for the group, the GDN Zoom, a GDN Google Docs folder, GDN distribution channels for consulting with the community, Survey Tool, presentation templates, GDN Style Guide.

Typical time contribution expectations:

The chairs tend to need more time to contribute and are the people who work directly with the executive director to ensure achievement of the deliverables. They should anticipate a total of four 30 minute meetings with the executive director prior to the start, at two points during the project, and at the end to aid planning and transition to next steps in addition to the working group meetings (typically 4 to 6 needed). Total = 9 to 12 hours across a full year.

The group members should anticipate 4 to 6 meetings (60 minutes each) across a 6 to 8 month period. They should also anticipate approximately 1 to 2 hours offside to gather and provide inputs into the project and approximately 2 hours at the end to finalize a review of the final product. Total = 7 to 10 hours across a full year.

A writer will need to contribute about two days to craft and finalize the written product. For that reason, the final product is recommended to be no long than 5 to 10 pages and supported by appendices.

If primary research or outside consultation are anticipated or there is a desire to write a more expansive product, this will naturally extend the times above and should be discussed with the executive director first to determine capacity and, if applicable, funding needs all of which will be discussed further with the GDN Executive Committee. Most working groups do not contain these types of expectations or needs (depending on the breadth and depth of expertise on the group).

GDN Communities of practice:

Definition:

These tend to be open in terms of size and membership and serve the purpose of identifying ideas and information that will help to inform other initiatives. They may also be sources for contributing consultation advice, research and expertise at the request of the GDN working groups (such as via



surveys, open forums, etc.). They are also venues where the GDN community may wish to learn so therefore may participate more passively to grow their understanding of the digitization and credential exchange field.

Membership process:

There is no nomination process for communities of practice; however, the GDN executive committee reserves the right to define a lead to help encourage engagement and pursue changes to participation and process that might become necessary to ensure alignment with GDN's statutes and principles. An online listerv and open roundtables at GDN events may be the venues, supported by listservs and surveys, in which GDN communities will be requested to provide input into working groups or other specified initiatives of the board.

When a subgroup of a community of practice evolves to working group status:

At times, a community of practice may break off into a smaller group that wishes to engage in specified work to help surface information or outputs that might help further specific GDN initiatives. If this happens and sufficient information and deliverables appear to be evident, it is expected that a terms of reference for a formal working group as defined above will be brought forward the GDN Executive Committee through the GDN executive director for consideration as a showcase initiative that may require further definition and support. The Executive Committee will also ensure the GDN board is advised and further input sought should doing so be necessary to advance the emergent initiative further.

Membership Principles

For GDN working groups:

Ensuring members of the core volunteer working groups have or can contribute to the following all of which are practical examples used in the past and that serve to illustrate the principles of the GDN Declaration in action:

- Have a sufficiently diverse set of skills, knowledge, and background of lived and formal experience to ensure robust quality outcomes associated with the scope of the working group's terms of reference which is a prioritized requirement to ensure quality output on behalf of the GDN;
- Represent the principles of diversity that are embedded in the GDN statutes and bylaws;
- Have the resources and time to participate as a volunteer and meet the deliverables and timelines of the terms of reference;
- Have demonstrable evidence that they are supportive of and can create content and deliverables that align with the GDN statute and declaration principles (typically demonstrated by being a Signatory, Patron or partnering MOU organization);
- Interest in contributing to supporting and expanding the Network;



- Have the support of their organization to participate in the working group as a volunteer representative of their broader community, not for their individual organization;
- Are able on behalf of their organizations or themselves to participate without conflict.

For GDN communities of practice:

Ensuring participants in communities of practice have or can contribute to the following:

- Interest and/or knowledge about the consultation topic at hand or a desire to learn about the topic;
- A willingness to contribute their thoughts and/or expertise to help enrich the quality and breadth of consultation input into any given topic or initiative;
- A willingness to engage in respectful collaborative engagement that aligns with the GDN ethical principles;
- Interest in contributing to supporting and expanding the Network;
- An ability on behalf of their organizations or themselves to participate without conflict.

Membership Call Approach

Where necessary and practicable, open calls at GDN events, including but not limited to the Annual Meeting, and/or via GDN and partner social media channels, could potentially occur for the following participation opportunities:

- Nomination for consideration for membership on a defined working group (final membership to be determined by the GDN Executive Board with the support of the GDN Executive Director);
- Participation in an open community of practice via an online GDN managed listserv;
- Participation in consultation focus groups or surveys;
- Other opportunities as these may arise that are not explicitly identified above.

Final Written Products

Process for Written Material Slated for GDN Publication:

Most initiatives, particularly those pursued by the GDN working groups, will result in a final written content report, blog post or other material that will likely be published on the GDN website. The working groups will be well advised to contemplate such deliverables at the start as keeping the GDN community informed of this type of work helps to enrich the Network downstream effort.

Once compiling a draft, the working group is welcome to conduct their own initial peer review process if they feel this will help to ensure the robustness of the final content. Typically, credit will be acknowledged for all contributors to final published material.

The working group chair(s) should submit the final draft to the executive director with a goal to extend the peer review process and ensure alignment with the GDN statutes and principles. It also helps to extend the peer review process. This will include subsequent review and edit by the executive director,



the GDN Executive Committee on behalf of the Board, the GDN support team, and other peer reviewers as might emerge from time to time. The goal to the extent possible is to ensure content accuracy, confirmation of appropriate APA citing, alignment with GDN statutes and principles, consistency of writing style and grammar, and application of a design style as appropriate to the eventual publication location.

This process requires time as the GDN team is part-time and the Executive Committee members are volunteers; therefore, original drafters need to consider this when wishing for a certain date of publication (typically a minimum of three to six months as a minimum depending on the length and nature of the work required to take it to a published and fully approved, peer reviewed state and then to subsequently publish it on the GDN site).

Once fully compiled, the final reports will be reviewed one more time and approved by the GDN executive committee of the board with recommendations from the executive director. The chair(s) of the working groups will be asked to engage in this process as necessary to help support publication of a final product on the GDN website site and through its channels.

The GDN support team will publish the report on the GDN site and possibly also through GDN social media and event channels. Publication in other venues and channels is required to wait for publication through the GDN channels first.

APA citations/authorship:

In all instances, formal APA style referencing that situates the timing of any research and/or primary authorship must be followed to avoid any future problems. Those submitting content of this nature into any written piece are responsible for ensuring this occurs. If subsequent issues arise with research or content submitted, this could result in their contributions being modified, deleted from the report or the final report not being published. We appreciate the contributors help with ensuring robust citation and research time stamping occurs.

Final Written Products:

The working group and whomever on the working group is writing the final product are advised to focus first on developing a table of contents frame for the final product (to guide future focused work and discussion). They are also encourage to achieve agreement on content categories and direction to avoid downstream disagreements.

Any primary research should be submitted along with the base files used to create any statistical figures or tables in case these need to be double checked or modified in the final design process.

The group is asked to avoid creating visuals (citing visuals in other websites or reports is fine), formatting the final written product, or developing overall design or title pages. All the formatting and design work will be handled by the GDN support team. It is possible that some of the content may be rewritten to



enable publication on a website rather than in a written document. Sometimes, not always, the final report will be supplemented with a web page.

Questions

Please direct any questions about any of the above to the GDN executive director (execdir@groningendeclaration.org).