Building a healthy and vibrant volunteer driven community: The Bio-IT project

Marc Gouw – Software Engineer @ Gibson Team

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The European Molecular Biology Laboratory

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Bioinformatics

Use of computational sciences to organize and analyze biological data

- > 50 % purely bioinformatics
- Many completely computational labs
- 0 labs with no bioinformatics

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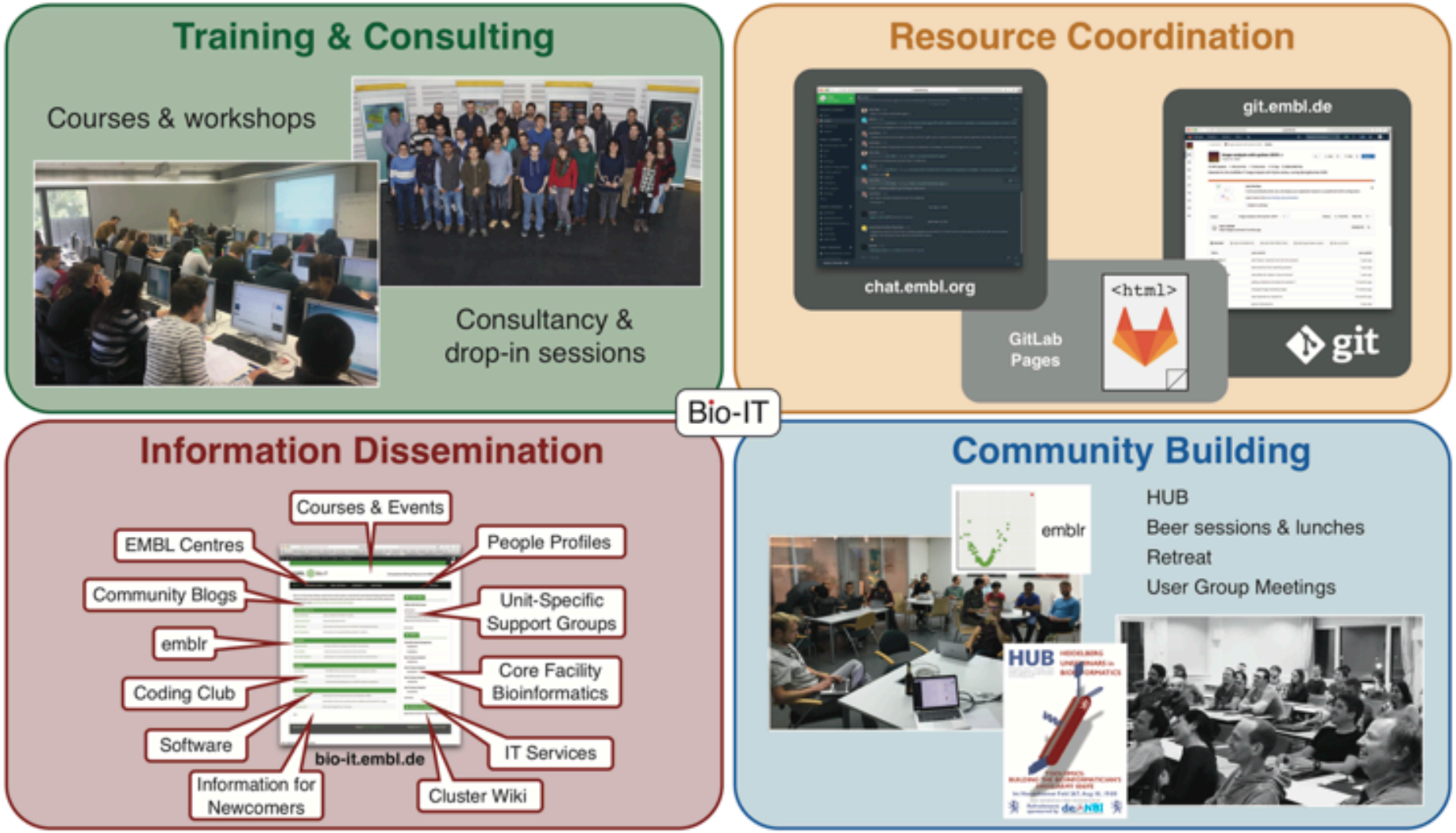
The Bio-IT project



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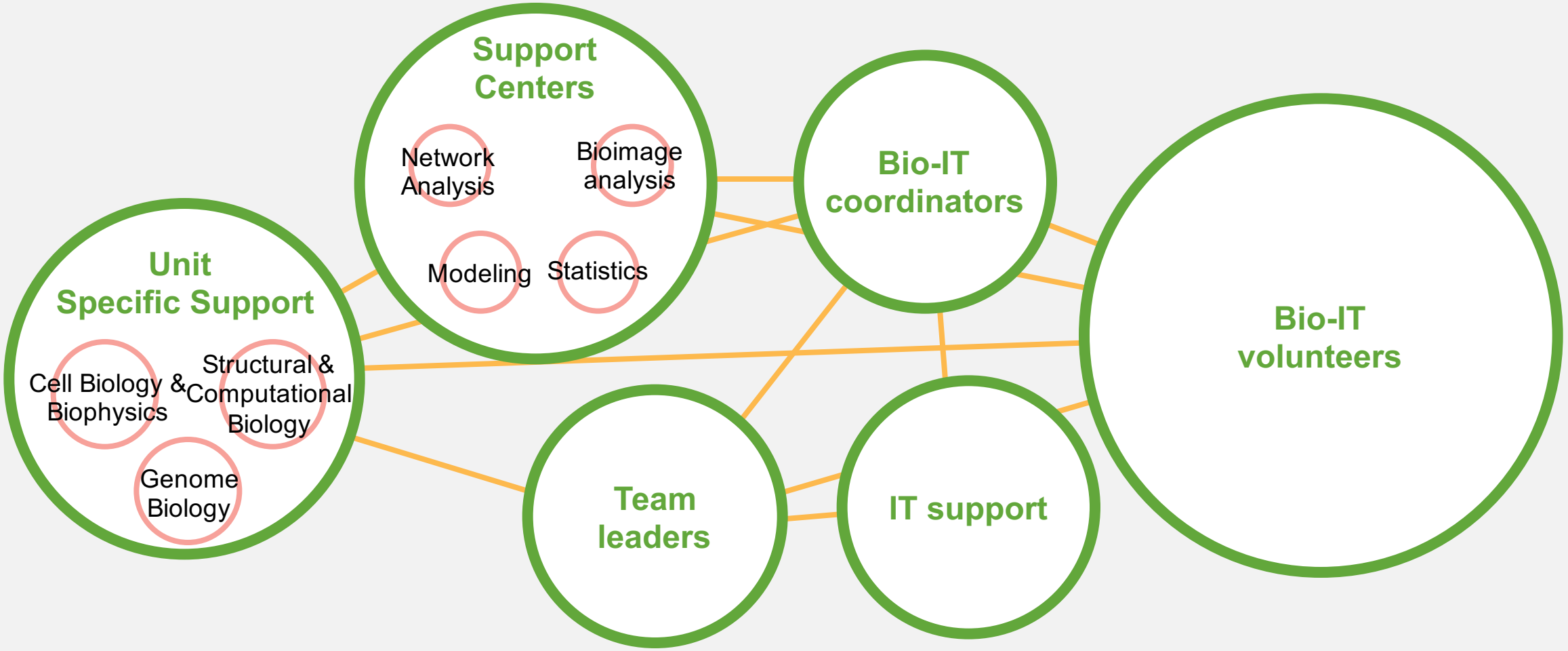
The Bio-IT community



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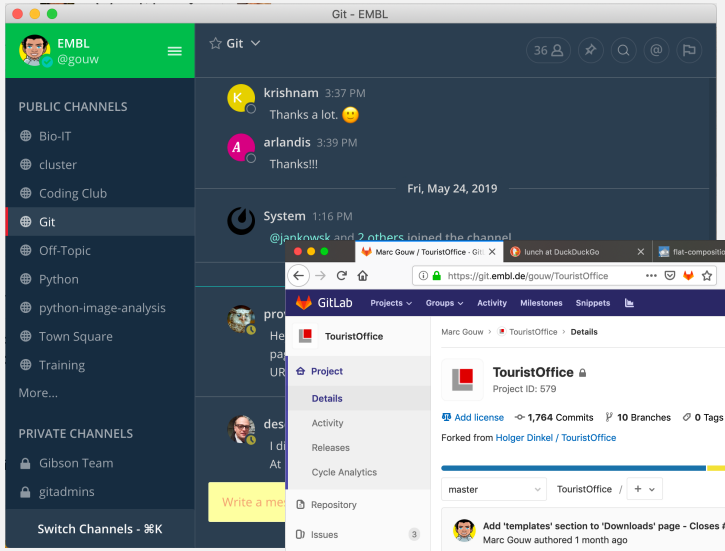
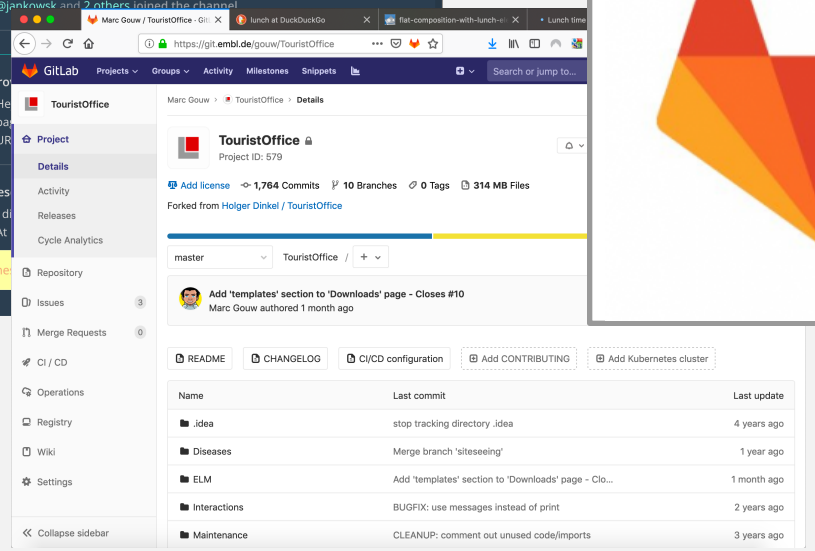
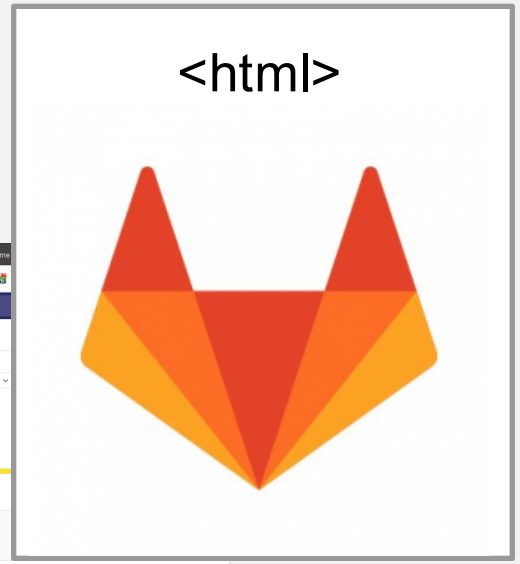
Example 1: GitLab, Chat & GitLab Pages



chat



git.embl.de



pages

- Locally hosted **GitLab**
  - > 1200 users
  - Chat (mattermost)
  - Websites (pages)

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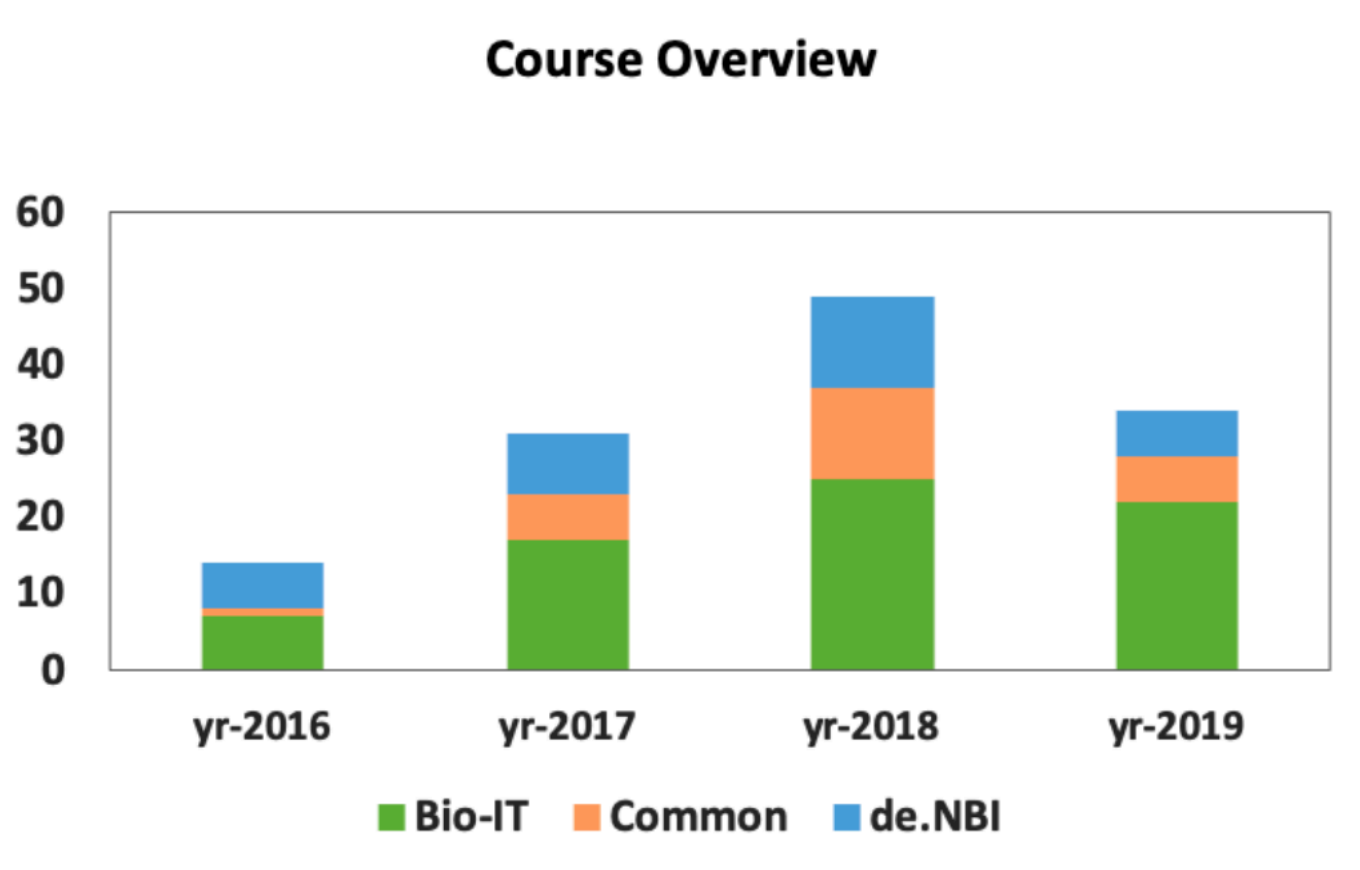
Example 2: Courses



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Growing a healthy and vibrant volunteer driven community

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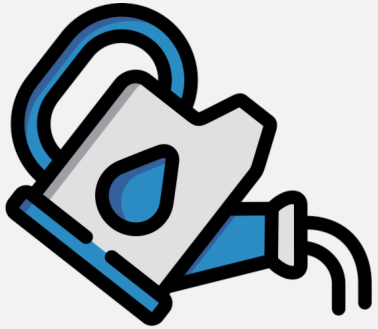

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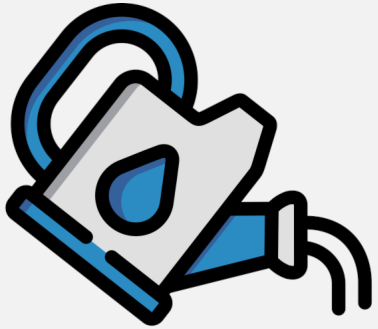
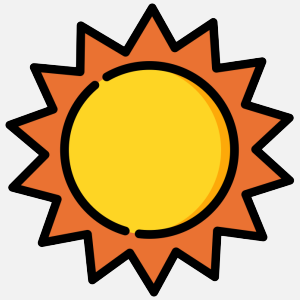
Growing a healthy and vibrant volunteer driven community





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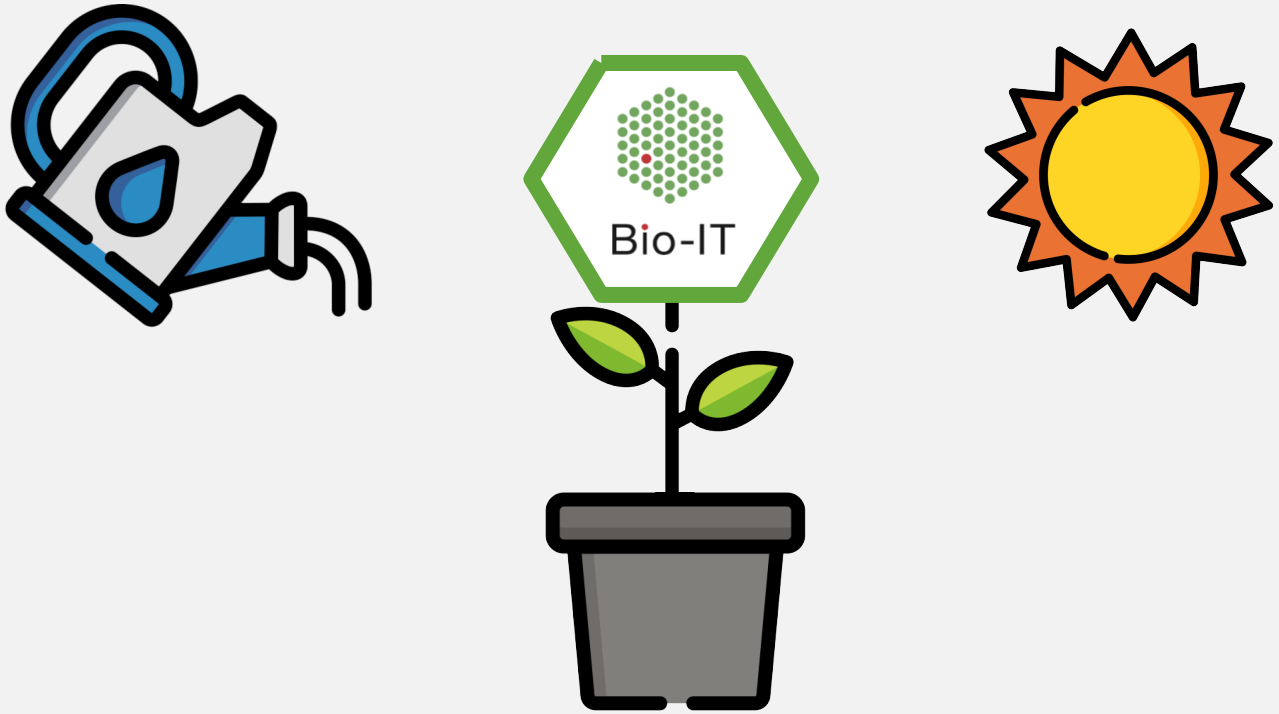
Growing a healthy and vibrant volunteer driven community



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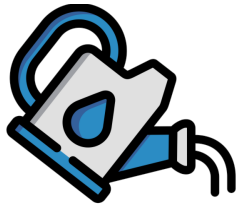
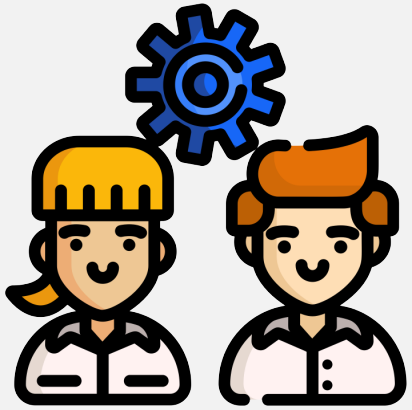
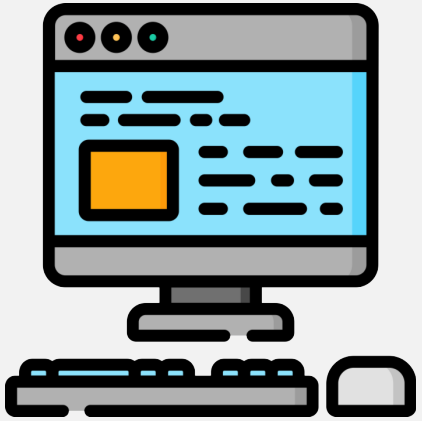
Institutional support





- Directly support **essential roles**
  - **Bio-IT coordinators** (full time staff for Bio-IT)
  - Support from de.NBI

- **Event & course organization** support
  - Rooms, equipment, lunch & coffee



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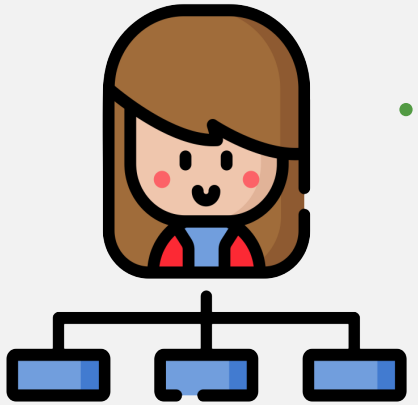

- Encourage participation at **Team Leader** level
  - Bio-IT contributions count as **infrastructure** contributions

The Bio-IT coordinators

Toby Hodges
Zeller team

Malvika Sharan
Gibson team

Bio-IT volunteers

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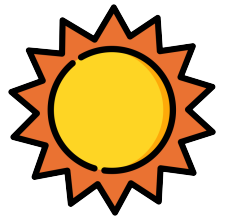
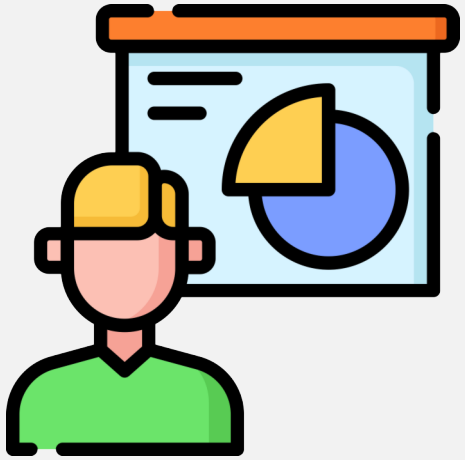
Volunteer motivation



- **Always say “yes”**
  - … to new ideas
  - … to changing existing ideas



- **Autonomy & independence**
  - Give volunteers **freedom to create** their vision
  - The choice of **how when** and **how often**

Volunteer support

- **Practical & administrative support**
  - booking rooms
  - sending e-mails
  - coordinating event registration
  - … (and all the other boring things)

EMBL Bio-IT The Portal for Computational Biology

Linux Course Documentation

EMBL Bio-IT The Portal for Computational Biology

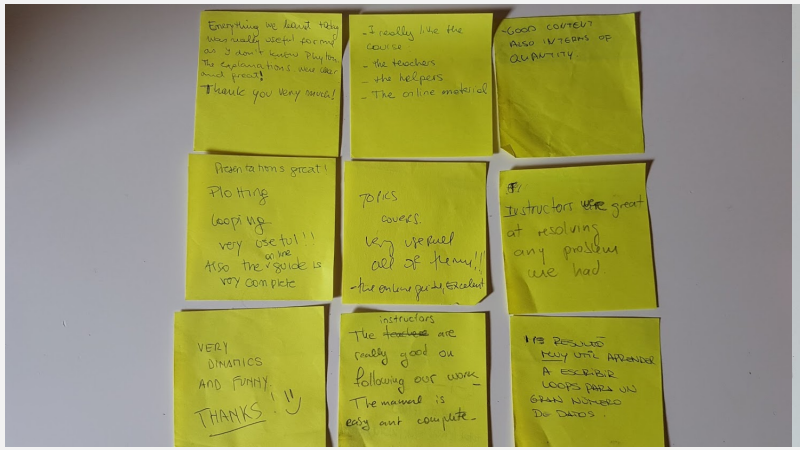
Introduction to Python Programming

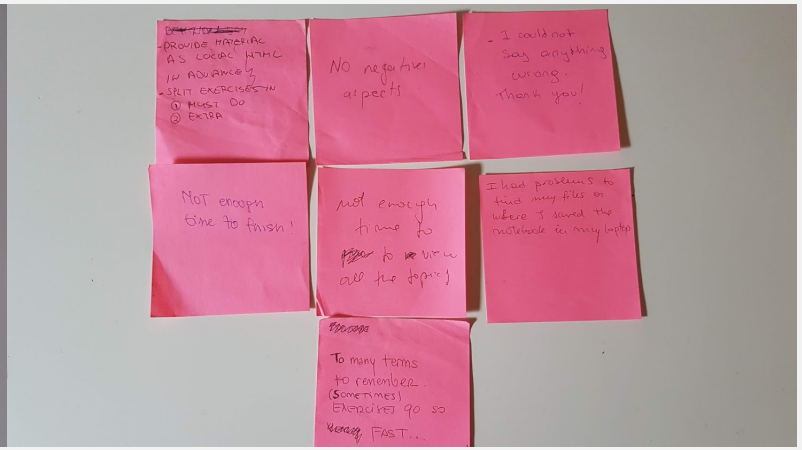
- **The Bio-IT network**
  - If they can't help, they know who can

- **Re-usable material**
  - Course material

Volunteer feedback & recognition

- **Course feedback**
  - Post-course surveys
  - “sticky-note” feedback





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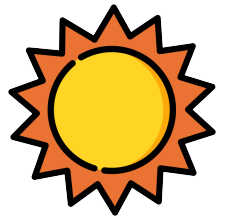
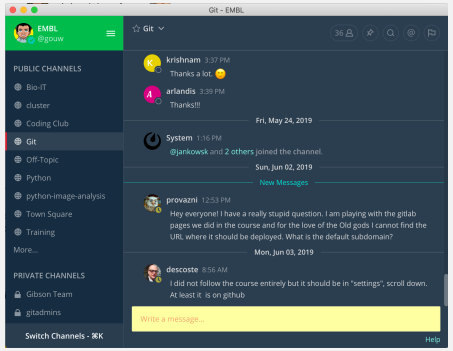
A community



- **Social events**
  - Bio-IT lunch (bi-monthly)
  - Bio-IT beer hour (bi-monthly)
  - Bio-IT BBQ (annual)

- **“Branding”**
  - Cool logo (with laptop stickers!)
  - Central portal for all **Bio-IT** info: bio-it.embl.de

- **Bio-IT chat**



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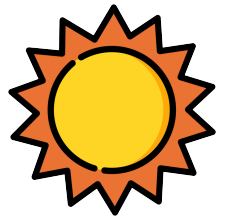
Its not always good weather

- **Challenges**
  - when demand exceeds capacity
  - when volunteers leave
  - long term-commitments

… some real sunshine …



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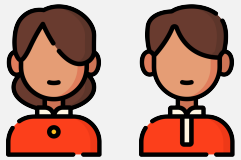

People

Toby Hodges

Malvika Sharan

Georg Zeller

Toby Gibson

Bio-IT community

Organizations

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de.NBI

Images & icons

freepik.com

flaticon.com

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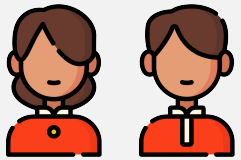

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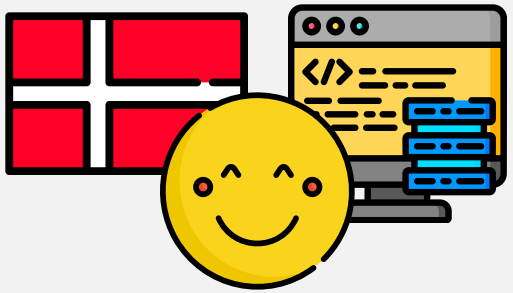
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