

LAB WEBSITE TEMPLATE

An easy, automatic, flexible website template for labs



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INTRODUCTION

Research laboratories need a professional and up-to-date website to showcase their work, attract collaborators, and establish a strong online presence, but developing and maintaining such a website can be challenging and time consuming. We present **Lab Website Template**, an open-source website template specifically designed for the unique needs of labs. It **automates citation generation, repo configuration, and anything else it can**, allowing labs to focus more on research and less on web development and grunt work.

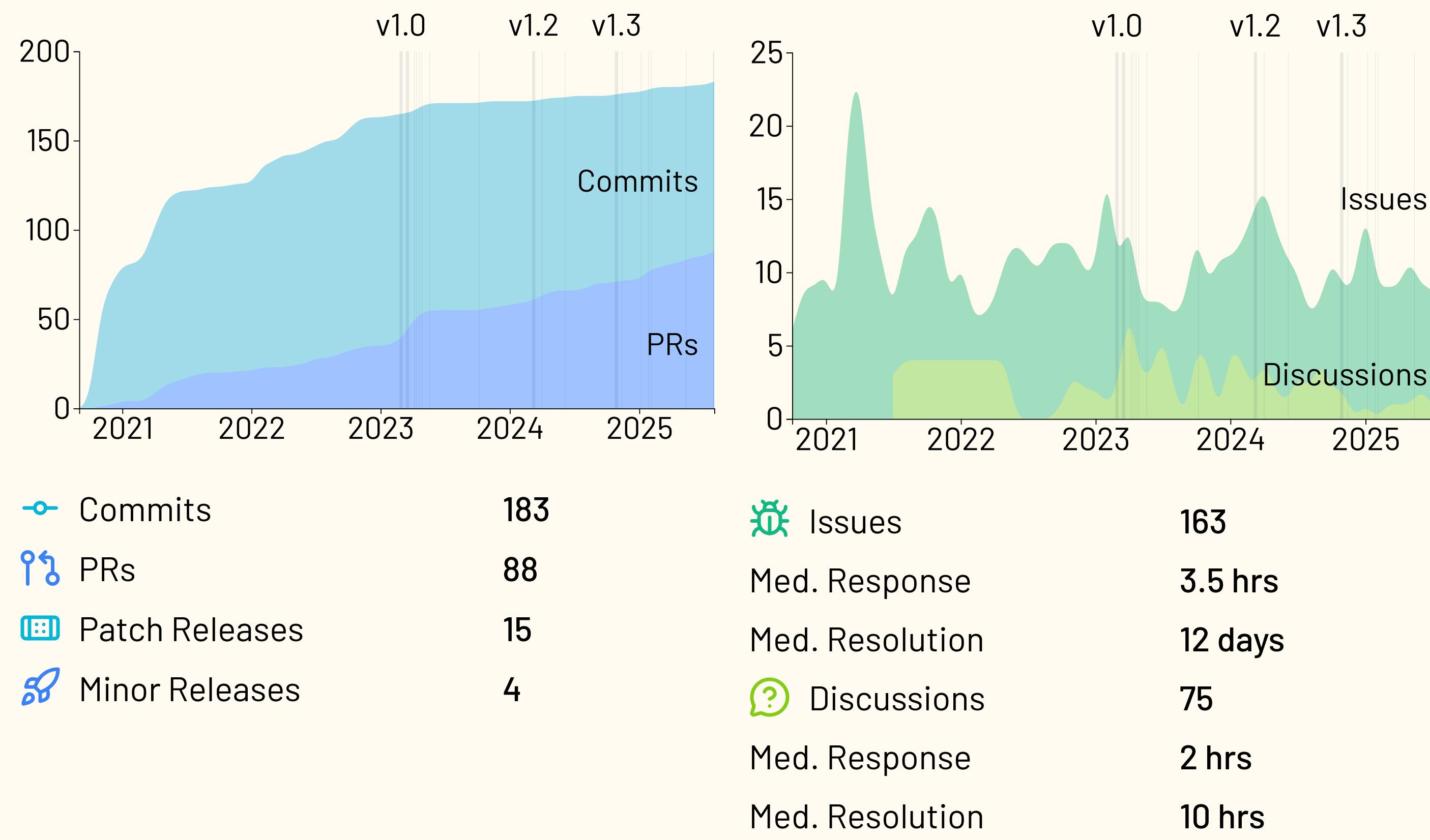
APPROACH

Our approach to designing and developing the template was deliberately chosen. We feel it benefited our tool and could benefit other research software as well. The template spent significant time in "pre-release" (< v1.0), where we gathered observations and direct feedback that shaped our approach. **Some things we noticed:**

- The most common pain points were about the same things (*Zipf's law*), like setting up their repo and configuring key options.
- Labs can't waste time on basic/common tasks or low-level details, but still need a way to customize things when necessary.
- Users want to see that the software is actively maintained, greatly comforted and attracted by good support.

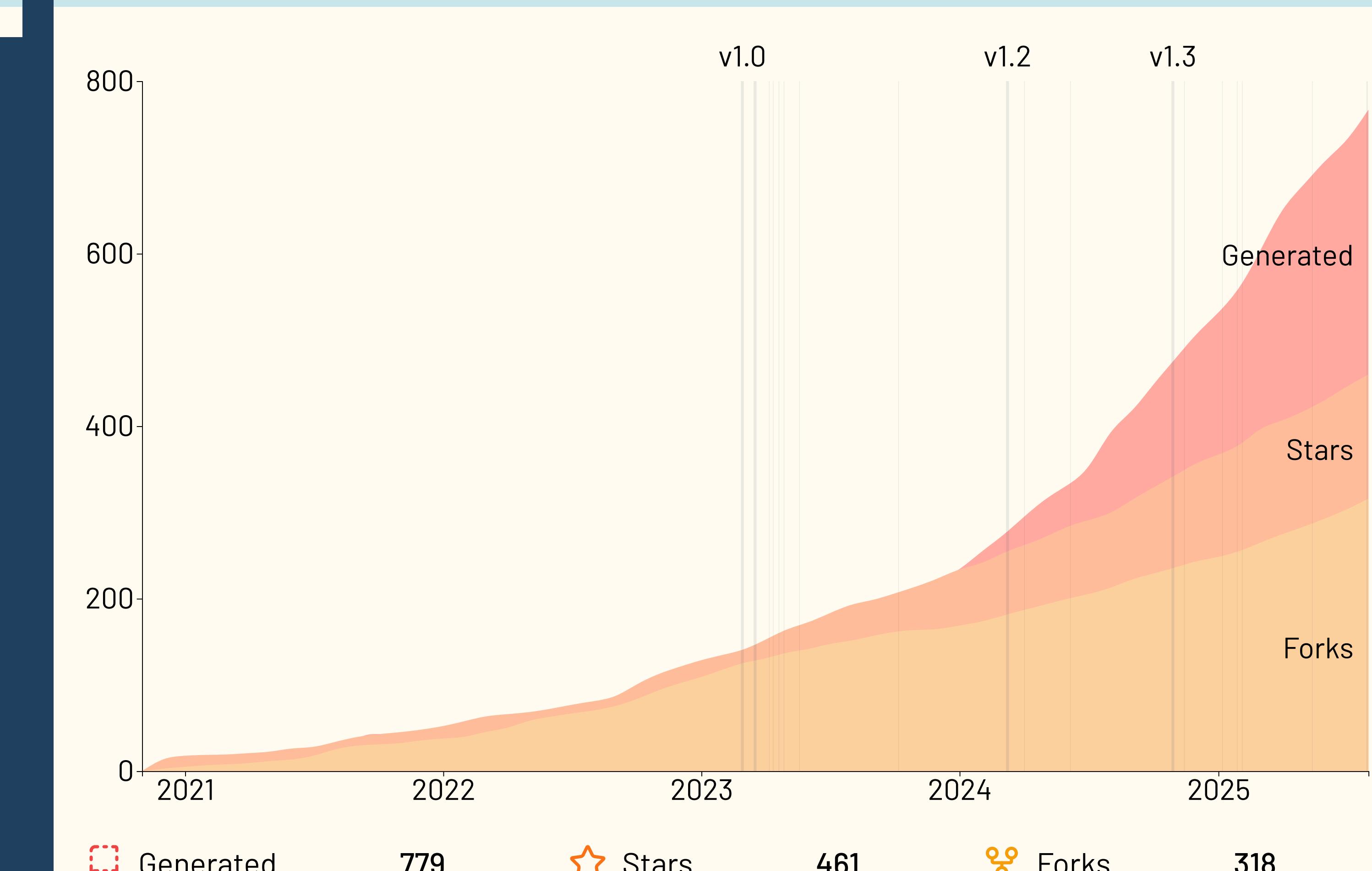
Some philosophies we adopted to address these needs:

- Doing is better than instructing. Exhaustive experimentation with GitHub Actions and scripting showed we could automate much more setup/config/etc. than we thought.
- Don't let issues languish. We try to respond quickly and discuss pros/cons of suggestions to make users feel heard, even if actual resolution takes longer.
- Keep it simple and focused. We diligently consider all feedback, but also don't accept every suggestion at face value to avoid feature/config bloat (*inner-platform effect*).
- Documentation is essential. Code/comments are not enough. We invested in writing a full GitBook suite with examples, guides, diagrams, search, etc. Users can help themselves for common issues, saving us time for more valuable work.
- Carefully structure repos. We try to separate "under-the-hood content" from "user content" so users can focus on just what's important.



METHODS

OUTCOME



The success of our design and approach is evidenced by the template's widespread adoption, with considerable activity on GitHub and a growing gallery of dozens of active labs using it. This work reflects not just a powerful software tool, but an evolving community resource that effectively serves the needs of its users.

