

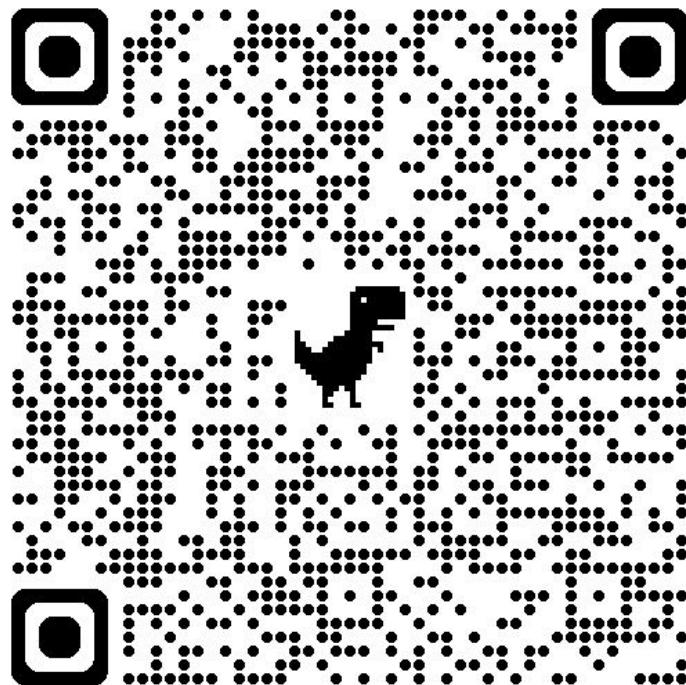
The First Person Project

Building a social utility that
puts people first—always

Drummond Reed & Friends
VRM Day
Computer History Museum
Mountain View, California
2025-04-07



For a complete copy of this slide deck, including all links:



Why?

Doc posted this
over ten years ago.



≡

🔍

Why we need first person technologies on the Net

MARCH 19, 2014 / DOC SEARLS / 15 COMMENTS



We need **first person technologies** for the same reason we need first person voices: because there are some things only a person can say and do.



“ We won’t get back our privacy, or make real progress toward real personal freedom, until we develop and deploy first person technologies for everybody.

Without them our democracies and marketplaces will also continue to be compromised. ”

“We won't get back our privacy, or make real progress toward real personal freedom, until we develop and deploy first person technologies for everybody.

Without them our democracies and marketplaces will also continue to be compromised.”

So why — after **20 years** of trying...

...don't we have first person
technologies everywhere today?

Thesis: because we haven't
figured out how to build from
the bottom up.

Solving the problem from the
bottom up is the mission of the
First Person Project.

How?



Top Down



Bottom Up

Governments

BC Gov

Bhutan

EUDI

California

More...

Are they building safe, secure digital wallets
and credentials to serve their own citizens?

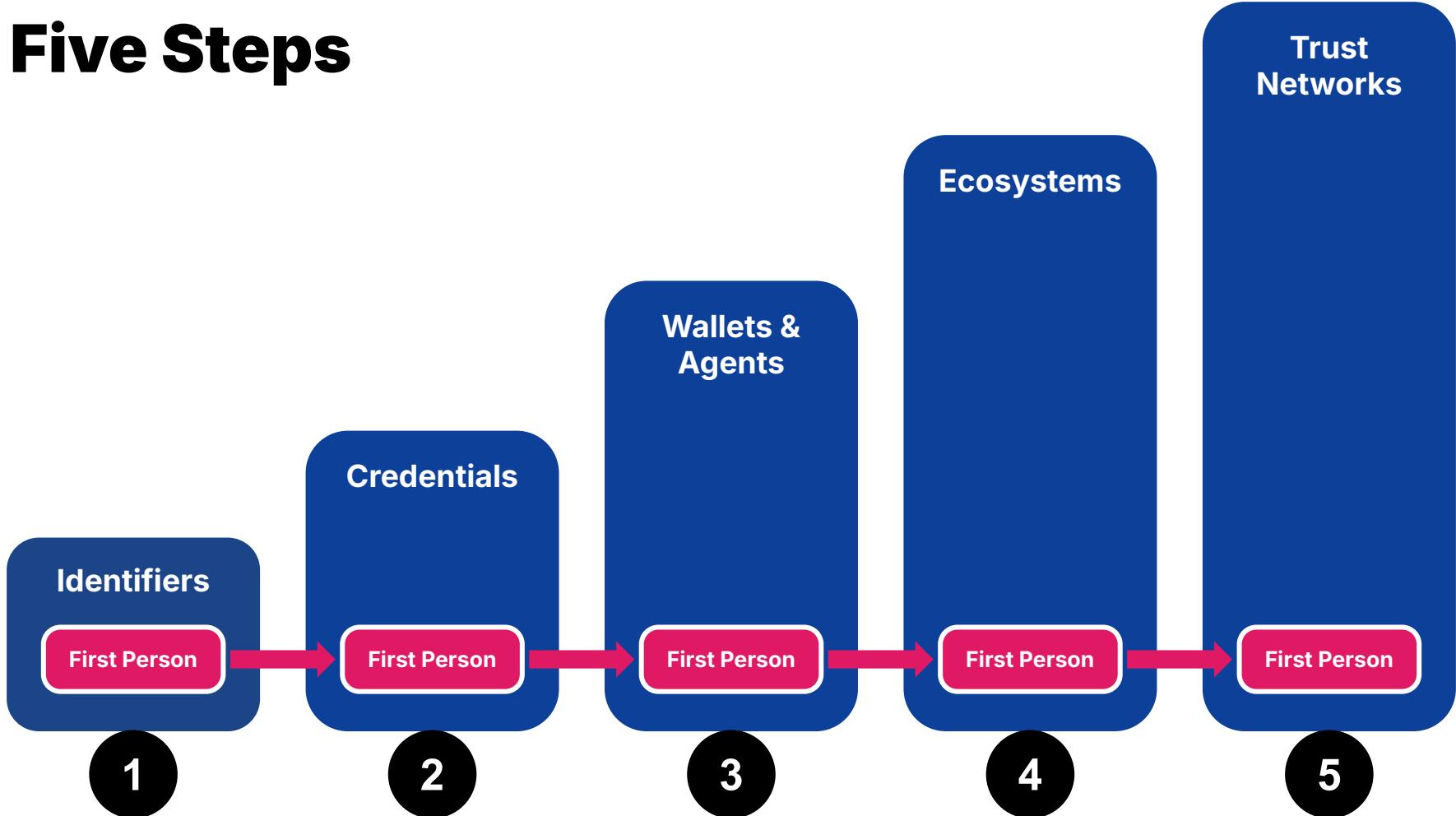


Are they building universally interoperable first
person technologies that always put people first?

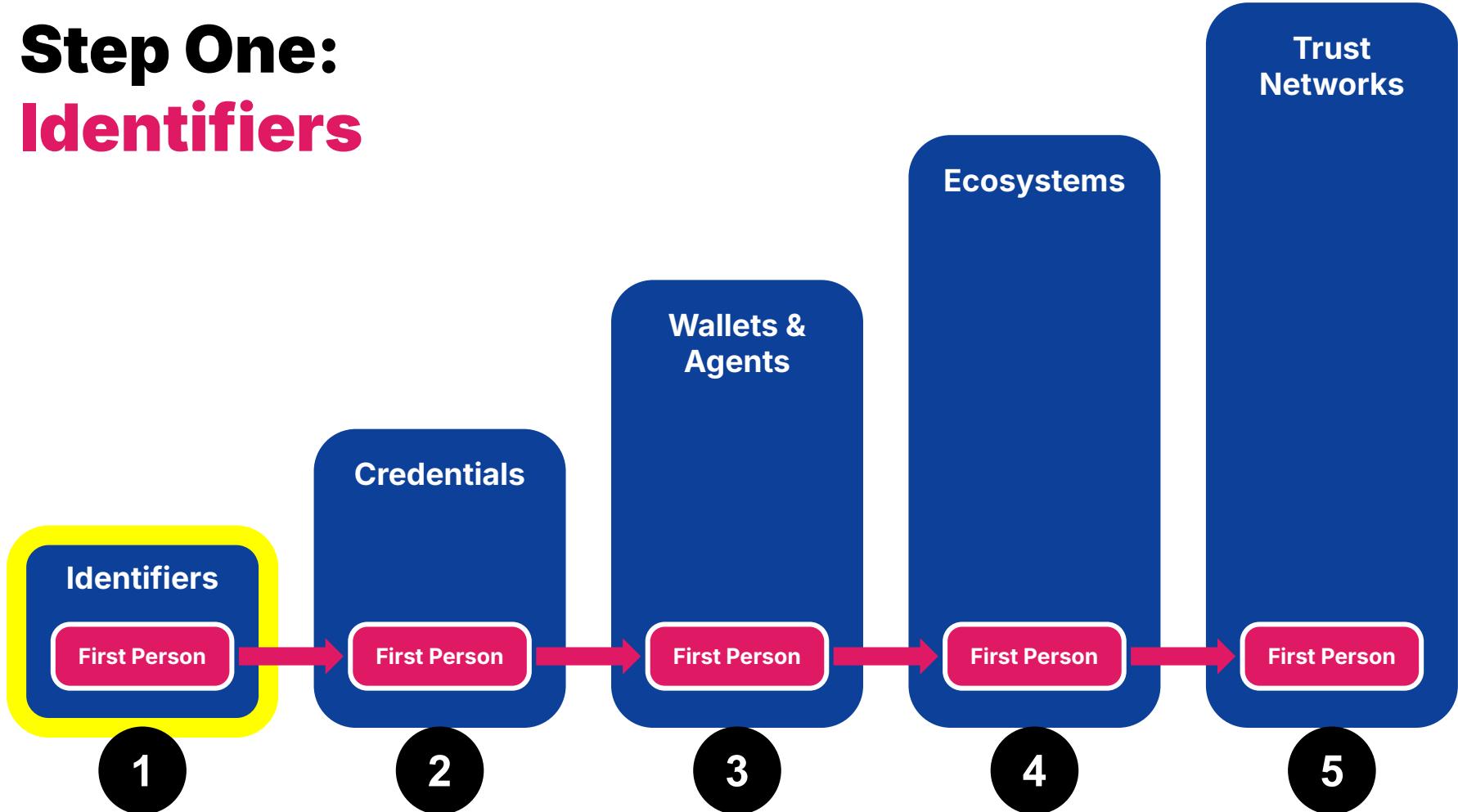
People

So how are we going to build
universally interoperable first person
infrastructure from **the bottom up?**

Five Steps



Step One: Identifiers



Easy, right? We
wrote the book on
**decentralized
identifiers (DIDs)!**

Decentralized digital identity and verifiable credentials

Self-Sovereign Identity

Alex Preukschat
Drummond Reed
with
Christopher Allen,
Fabian Vogelsteller,
and 52 other leading identity experts
Foreword by Doc Searls

MANNING



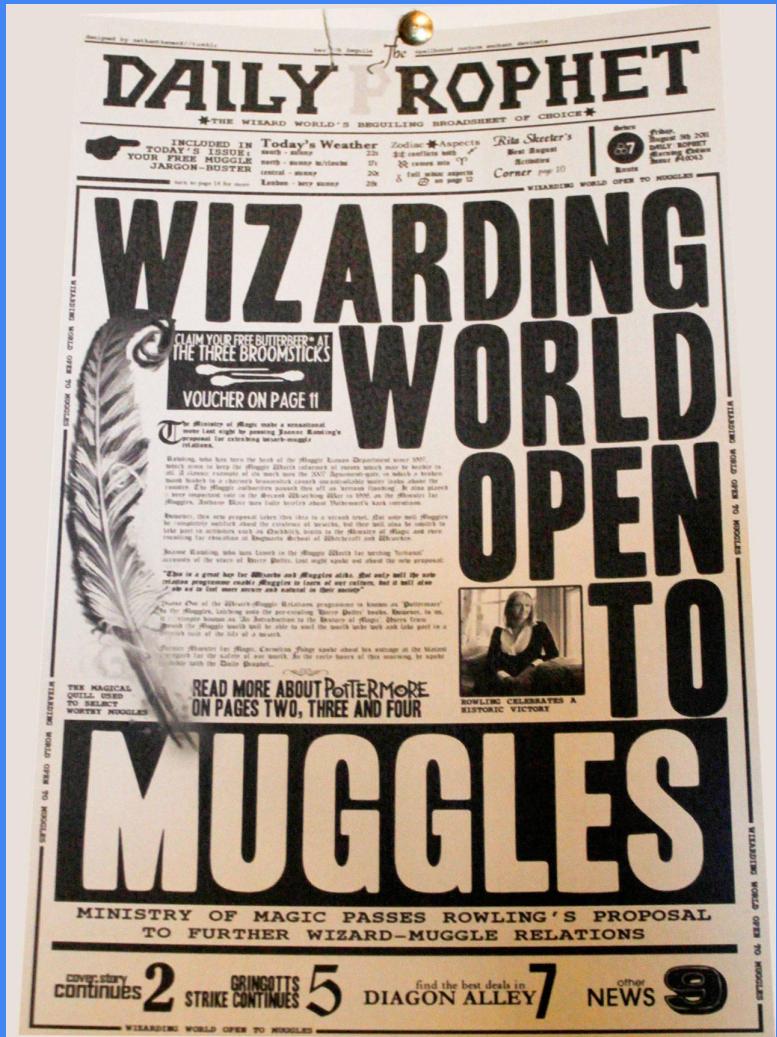
DIDs are not enough!

For First Person infrastructure,
we need **SCIDs!**

KERI for Muggles

IIW #33
Day 2 - Session #12
13 October 2021

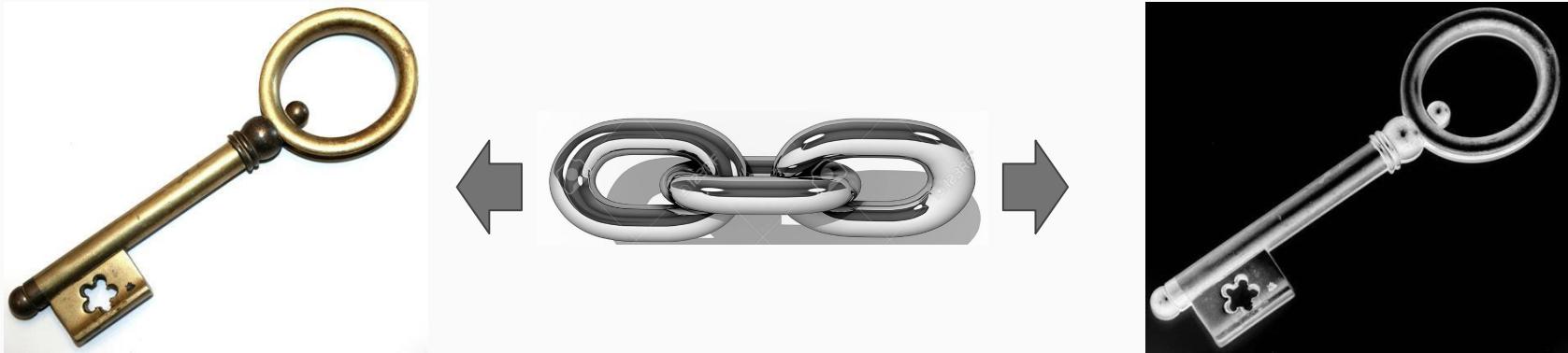
<https://keri.one>



A self-certifying identifier (SCID)
is a identifier that can be proven
to be the one and only identifier
tied to a public key
using cryptography alone*

* No blockchain needed

SCIDs can be created from any public/private key pair



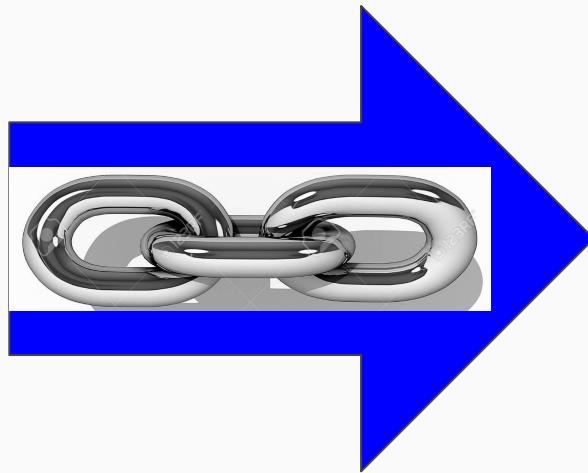
Public key— MUST
be shared

Cryptographic
binding

Private key— MUST
NOT be shared



Public key



Cryptographic
binding to
genesis file

**scid:21tD
AKCERh95u
GgKbJNHYp**

Self-certifying
identifier

SCIDs are the most self-sovereign identifier— they can be generated for free directly inside any modern digital wallet and are **portable for life**

No wonder we now have at least four SCID-based DID methods:

- ❑ did:webs (KERI)
- ❑ did:webvh (BC Gov)
- ❑ did:jlinc (Fed ID)
- ❑ did:plc (Bluesky)

Now we are aggregating all of them
into one DID supermethod: **did:scid**



Trust over IP Home Recent ▾ Spaces ▾ Teams ▾ More ▾

+ Create

Search

Home / DID SCID Method Specification

Edit Comment Print

DID SCID Method Specification



Owned by Drummond Reed ...

Last updated: Mar 31, 2025 • 14 min read • ↗ 23 people viewed

Version: Working Draft 03

Authors: Drummond Reed, Markus Sabadello, Jonathan Rayback, Alex Tweeddale

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[Introduction](#)

[Why another DID method?](#)

[#1: Self-Certifying Identifiers \(SCIDs\)](#)

[#2: Portability and Location Independence](#)

[#3: Privacy and Security](#)



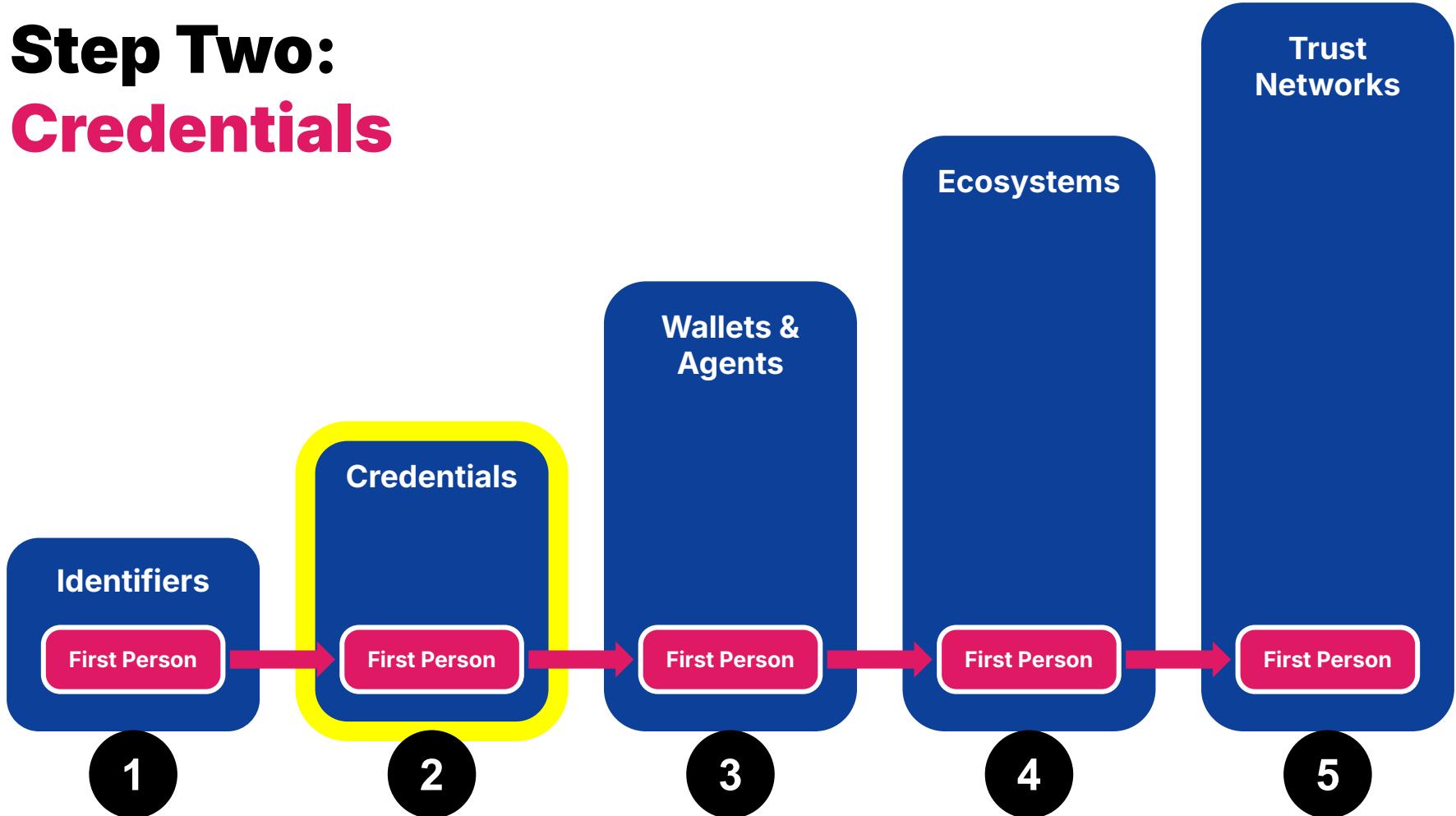
did:scid is the only DID method you will ever need because it works:

- ❑ Peer-to-peer
- ❑ Web-based
- ❑ Blockchain-based
- ❑ DHT-based

In short, did:scid is the DID method we need for **First Person identifiers**.



Step Two: Credentials



We have this
covered, right?
After all, the W3C
is almost done
with **Verifiable
Credentials 2.0**

Verifiable Credentials Data Model v2.0

[W3C Proposed Recommendation](#) 20 March 2025



▼ More details about this document

This version:

<https://www.w3.org/TR/2025/PR-vc-data-model-2.0-20250320/>

Latest published version:

<https://www.w3.org/TR/vc-data-model-2.0/>

Latest editor's draft:

<https://w3c.github.io/vc-data-model/>

History:

<https://www.w3.org/standards/history/vc-data-model-2.0/>

[Commit history](#)

Implementation report:

<https://w3c.github.io/vc-data-model-2.0-test-suite/>

Editors:

[Manu Sporny \(Digital Bazaar\)](#) (v1.0, v1.1, v2.0)

[Ted Thibodeau Jr \(OpenLink Software\)](#) (v2.0)

[Ivan Herman](#) (W3C) (v2.0)

[Gabe Cohen \(Block\)](#) (v2.0)

[Michael B. Jones \(Invited Expert\)](#) (v2.0)

VCs are not enough!

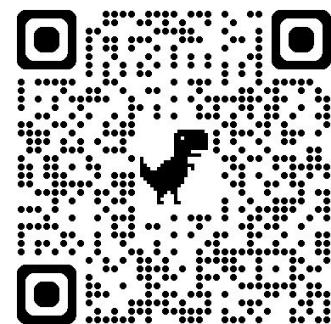
To begin with, W3C VC is only one of **five competing** digital credential formats.



Secondly, only Anoncreds
comes close to meeting the
privacy-preserving
requirements of
First Person credentials

Personhood credentials: Artificial intelligence and the value of privacy-preserving tools to distinguish who is real online

Steven Adler,^{*†1} Zoë Hitzig,^{*†1,2} Shrey Jain,^{*†3} Catherine Brewer,^{*4} Wayne Chang,^{*5} Renée DiResta,^{*25} Eddy Lazzarin,^{*6}
Sean McGregor,^{*} Wendy Seltzer,^{*8} Divya Siddarth,^{*9} Nouran Soliman,^{*10} Tobin South,^{*10} Connor Spelliscy,^{*11}
Manu Sporny,^{*12} Varya Srivastava,^{*4} John Bailey,¹³ Brian Christian,⁴ Andrew Critch,^{*14} Ronnie Falcon,¹⁵ Heather Flanagan,²⁵
Kim Hamilton Duffy,¹⁶ Eric Ho,¹⁷ Claire R. Leibowicz,¹⁸ Srikanth Nadhamuni,¹⁹ Alan Z. Rozenshtain,²⁰
David Schnurr,¹ Evan Shapiro,²¹ Lacey Strahm,¹⁵ Andrew Trask,^{4,15} Zoe Weinberg,²² Cedric Whitney,²³ Tom Zick²⁴



¹OpenAI, ²Harvard Society of Fellows, ³Microsoft, ⁴University of Oxford, ⁵SpruceID, ⁶a16z crypto,
⁷UL Research Institutes, ⁸Tucows, ⁹Collective Intelligence Project, ¹⁰Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

¹¹Decentralization Research Center, ¹²Digital Bazaar, ¹³American Enterprise Institute,

¹⁴Center for Human-Compatible AI, University of California, Berkeley, ¹⁵OpenMined,

¹⁶Decentralized Identity Foundation, ¹⁷Goodfire, ¹⁸Partnership on AI, ¹⁹eGovernments Foundation,

²⁰University of Minnesota Law School, ²¹Mina Foundation, ²²ex/ante, ²³School of Information, University of California, Berkeley,

²⁴Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University, ²⁵Independent Researcher

August 2024

The paper boils Personhood Credentials (PHCs) down to just two strict requirements:

1. **Credential limits:** PHC issuers must only issue one per person.
2. **Unlinkable pseudonymity:** PHC verifiers must accept zero-knowledge proofs (ZKP).

Even PHCs are not enough!

PHCs still rely on governments and organizations to be the issuers.

What about **people**?

This is where we finally get to the heart of the First Person Project:
First Person credentials

The basic idea is: what if we could provide strong proof of personhood using a zero-knowledge proofs of our own verified trust relationships?

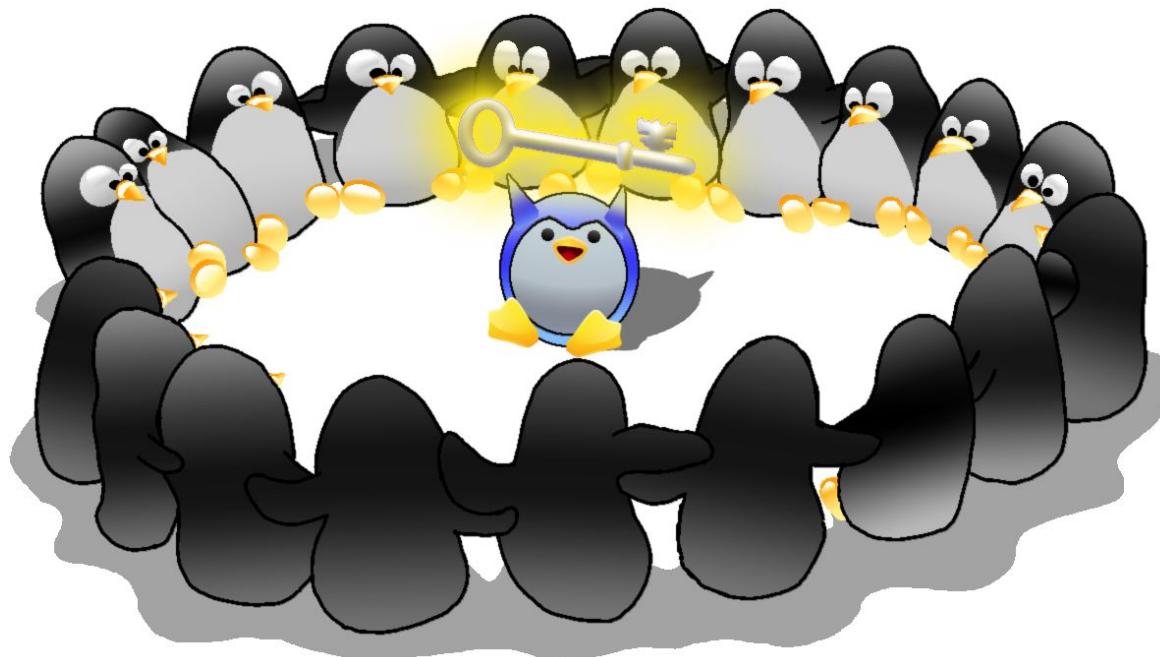
Example First Person credential



The heart of First Person credentials
is a fundamental new type of
verifiable digital credential: the
verifiable relationship credential
(VRC)

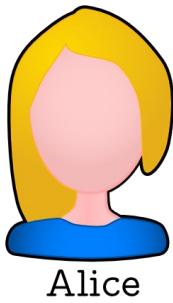
My favorite explanation of VRCs came from the First Person Project Workshop led by [Linux Foundation ED Jim Zemlin](#) and his staff two weeks ago at the annual LF Member Summit

Verifiable relationship credentials are Phil Zimmermann's dream.

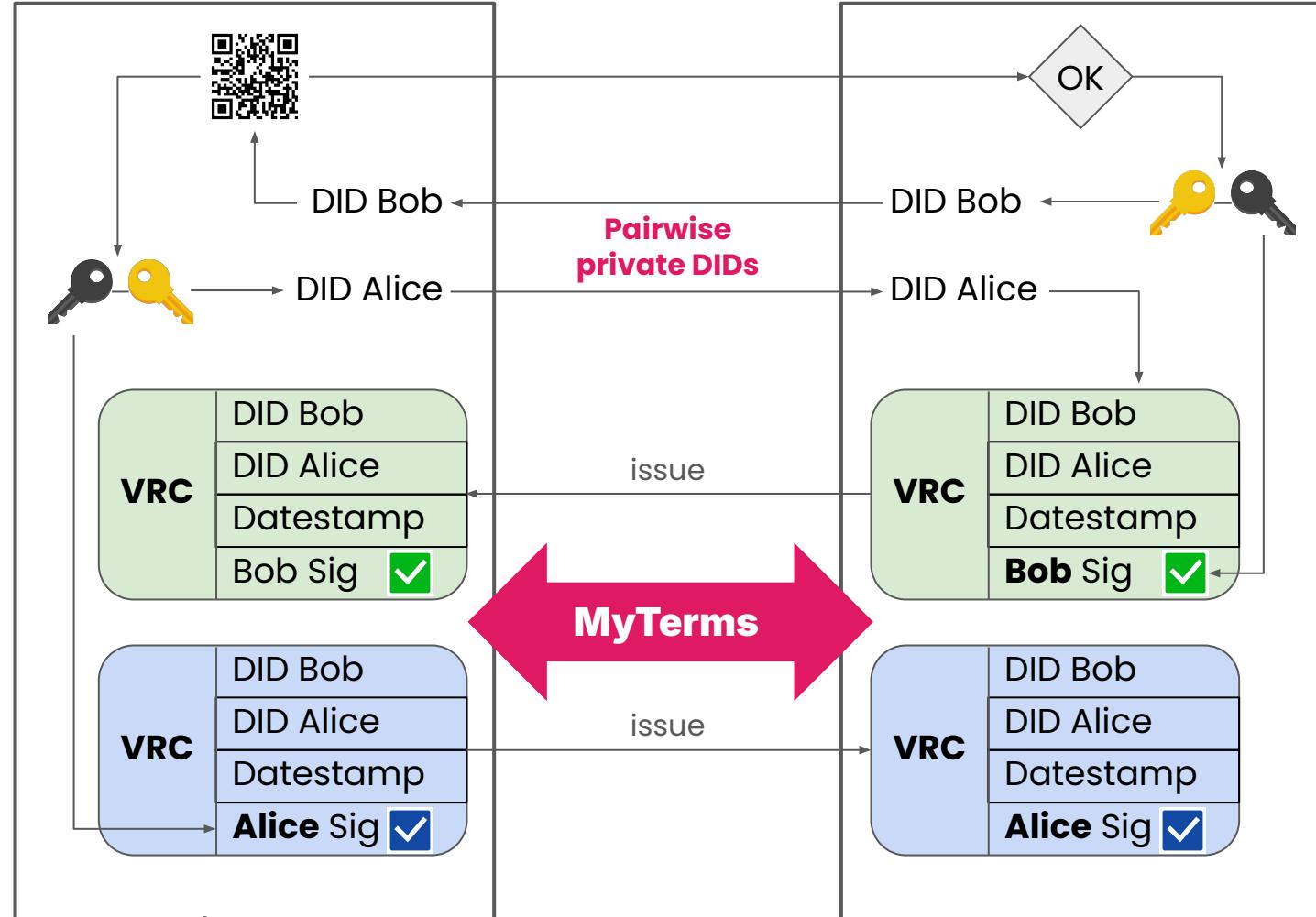


They are the ultimate instant key signing party.

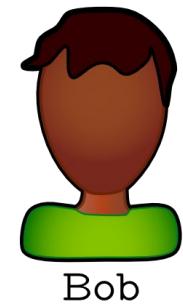
Alice's Wallet



Alice



Bob's Wallet



Bob



With VRCs, all of us can now form our
own personal relationship graphs.

That live entirely in our own digital wallets.

Not in any centralized social network.

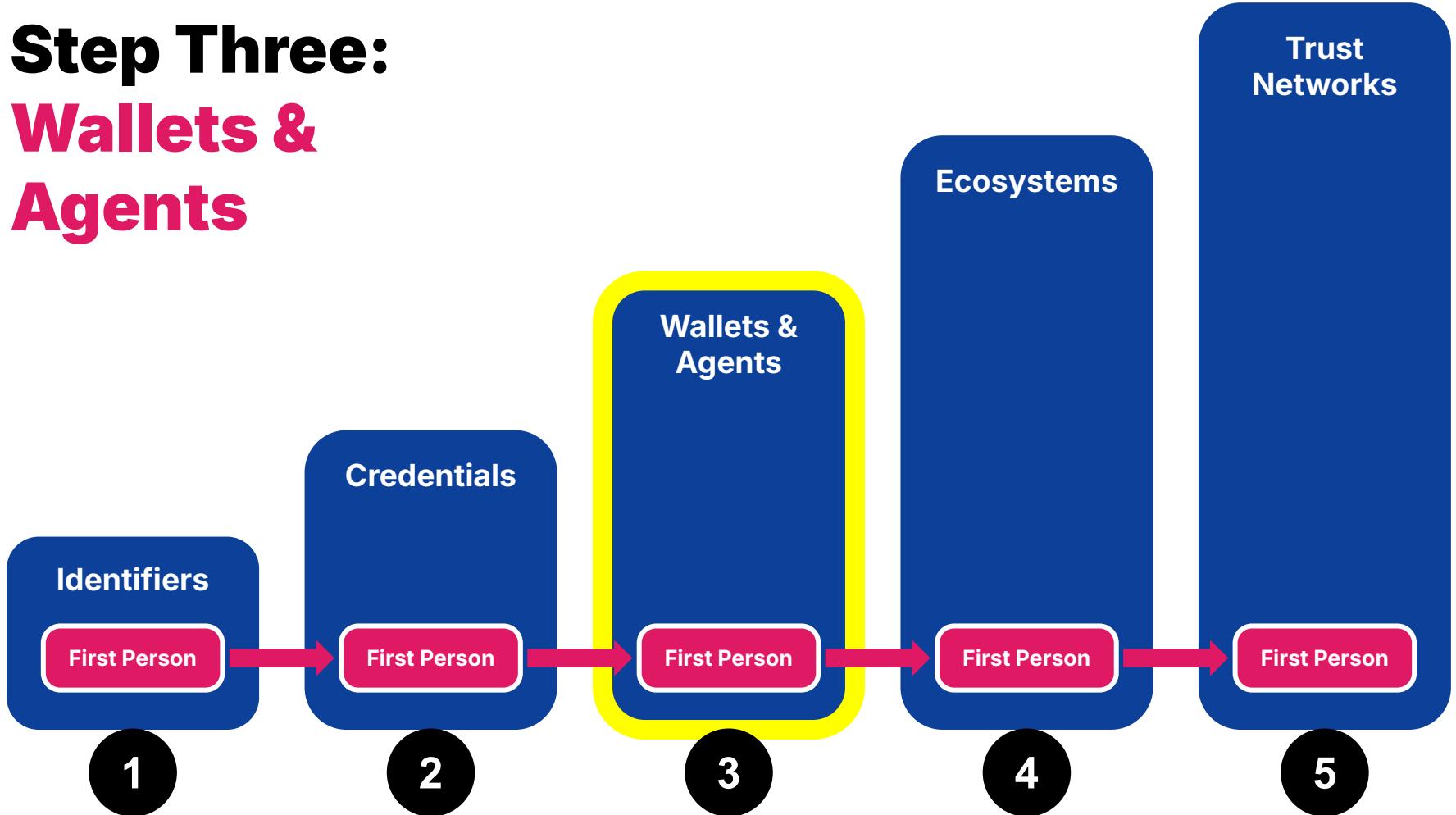
And we control who they are shared with.

For life.

With PHCs and VRCs, we have the
First Person credentials we need for
privacy-preserving digital identity
and verifiable trust relationships



Step Three: Wallets & Agents



There are dozens of open source
digital wallet projects.

 **LF** DECENTRALIZED TRUST



To become true first person technologies, they will need to support:

- First Person identifiers
- First Person credentials

But that is not enough!

Because where we're going...



...we won't need
wallets

We need agents.

Agentic Wallets: The Next AI Frontier

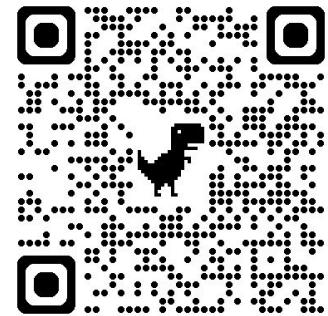
Watch the Recording Now

Trusted, Hyper-personal AI for
Customers, Citizens, and Users

Download Now

This webinar was held on Wednesday, March 5th. Fill out the form to download an on-demand recording.

In 2017, World Wide Web inventor and Inrupt co-founder **Sir Tim Berners-Lee** envisioned an AI agent that worked *for him*. One that he could trust with *all* of his data. One that delivered *hyper-personal* utility.



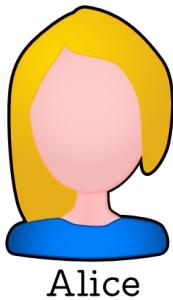
We need agents bonded to our wallets
so they can perform **trust tasks**.



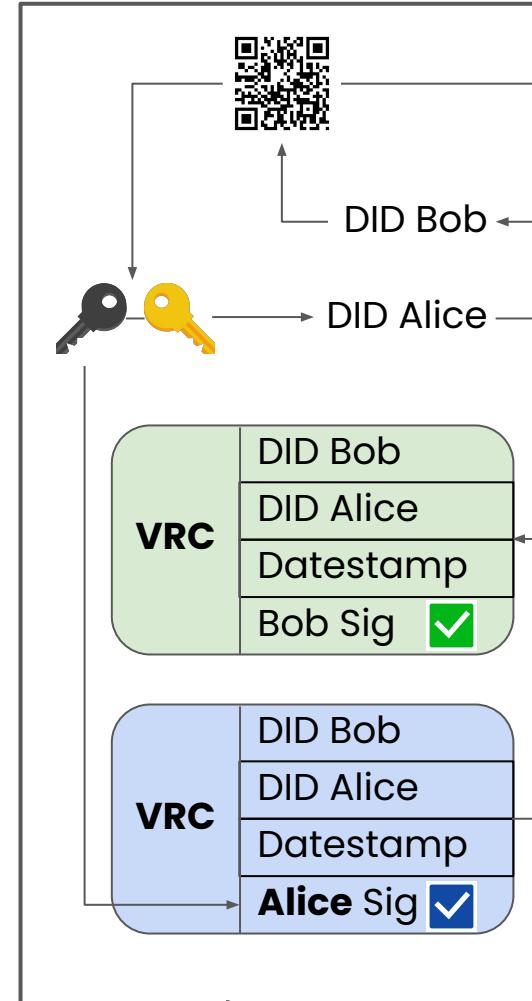
TRUST
Over IP

For one specific example,
let's return to Alice and Bob:

Alice's Wallet

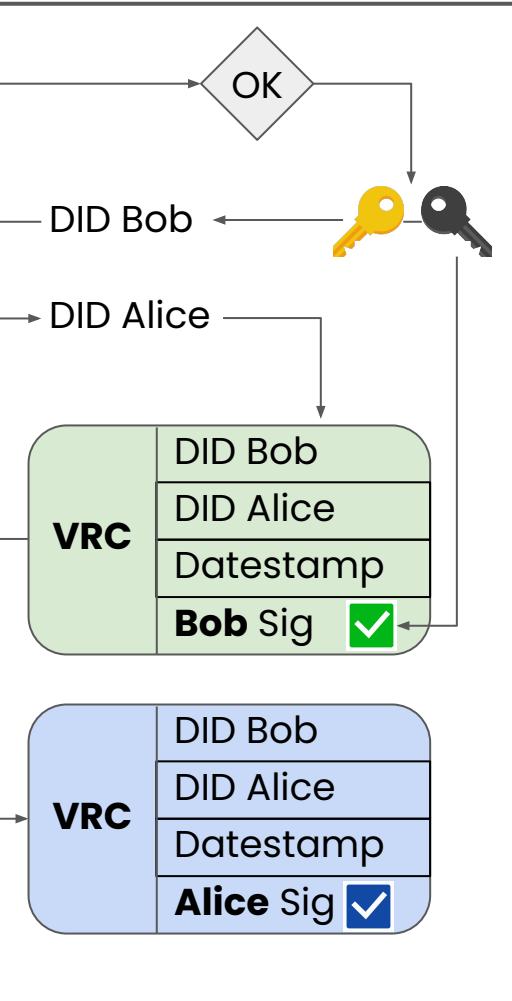


Alice

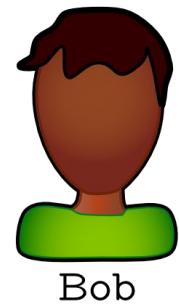


Pairwise
private DIDs

issue



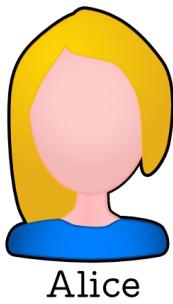
Bob's Wallet



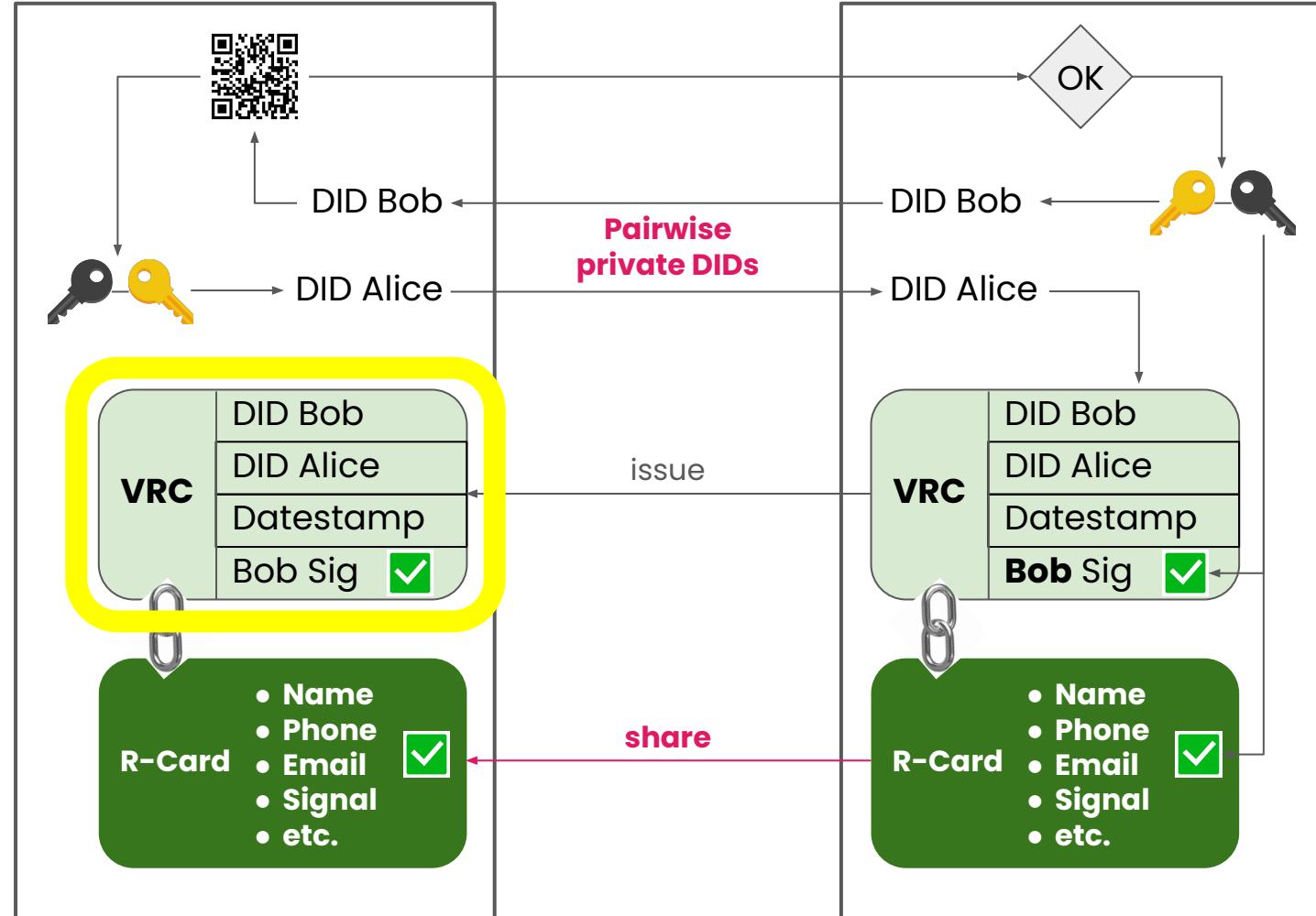
Bob



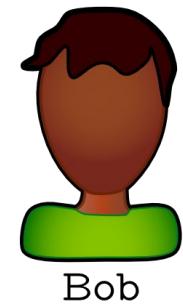
Alice's Wallet



Alice



Bob's Wallet



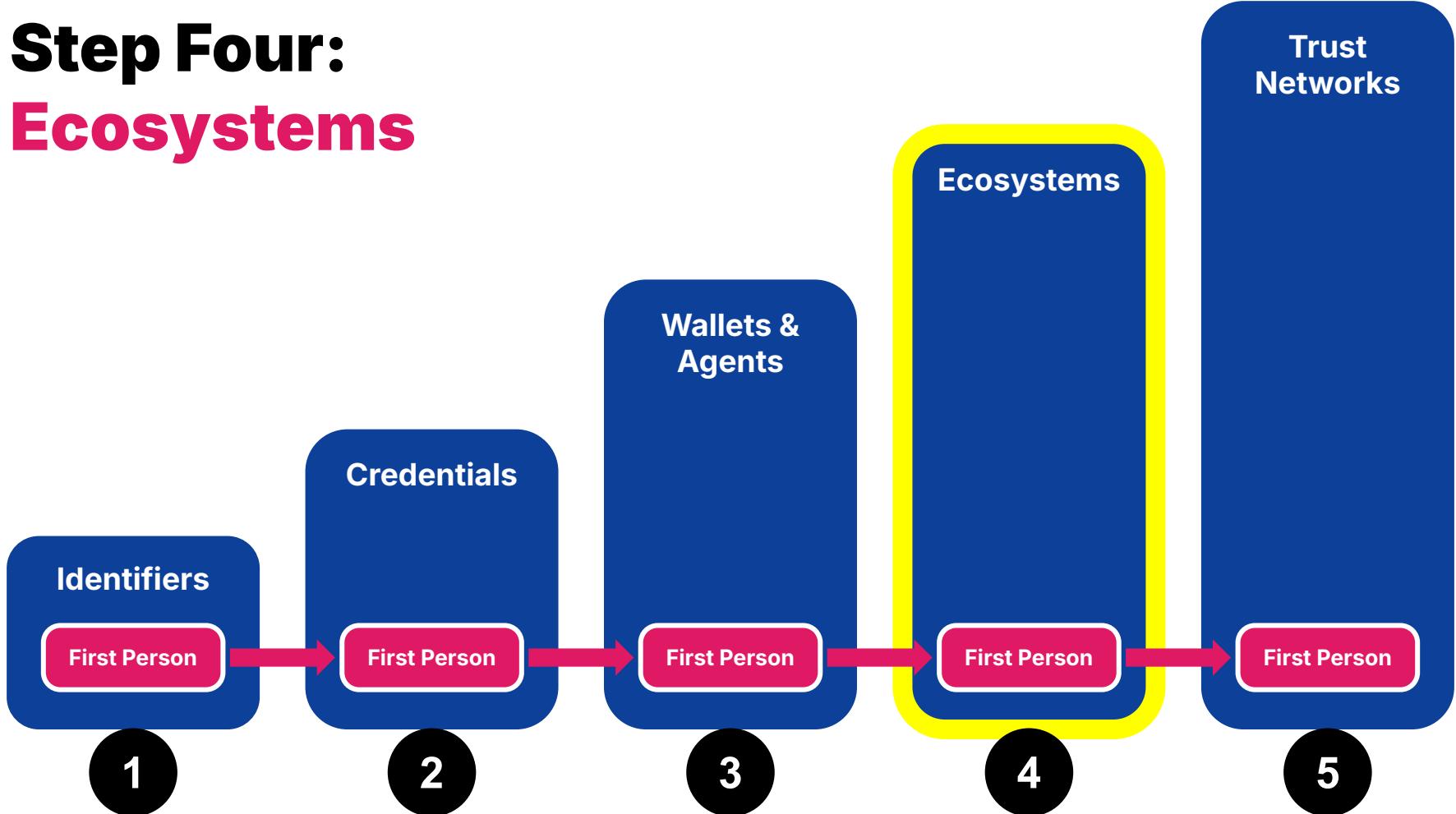
Bob



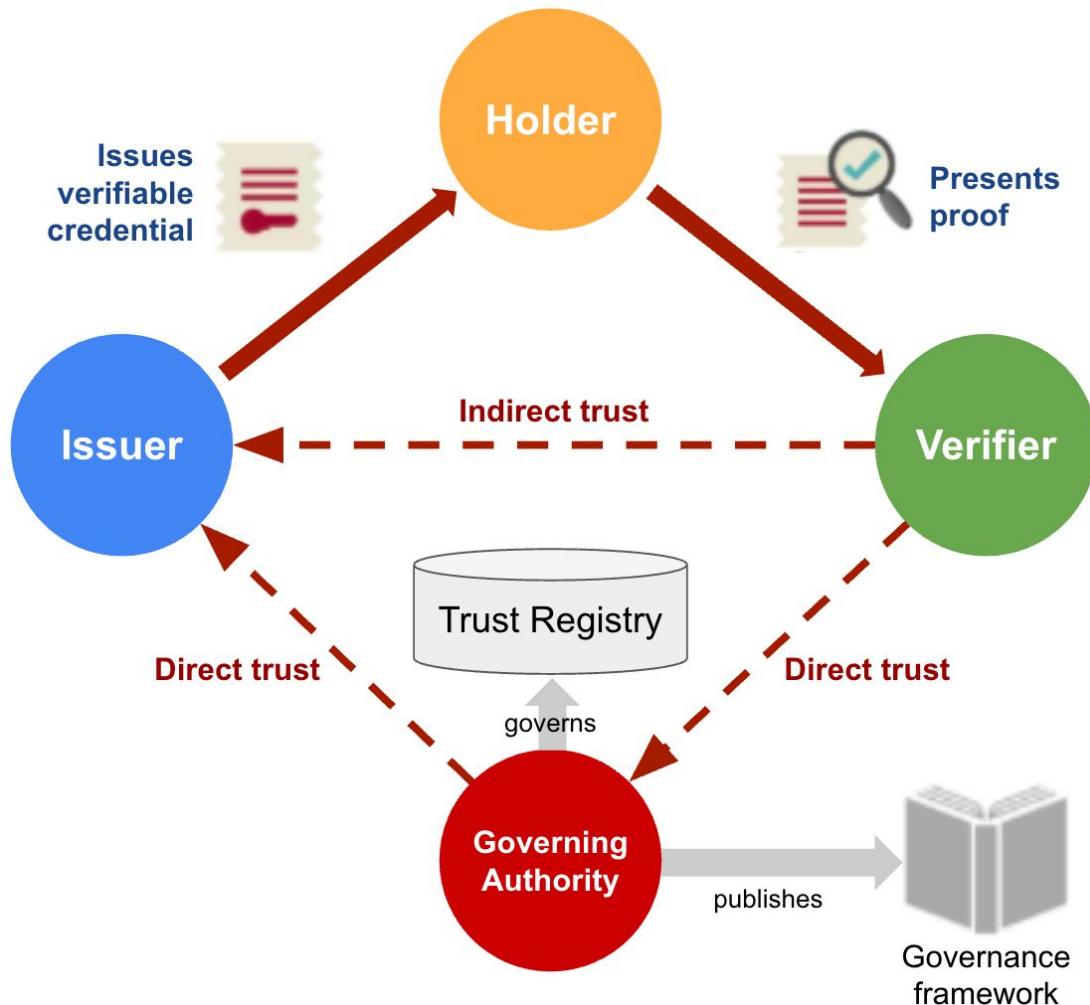
Trusted data sharing is just one of
hundreds of trust tasks that our
First Person agents will do for us.



Step Four: Ecosystems



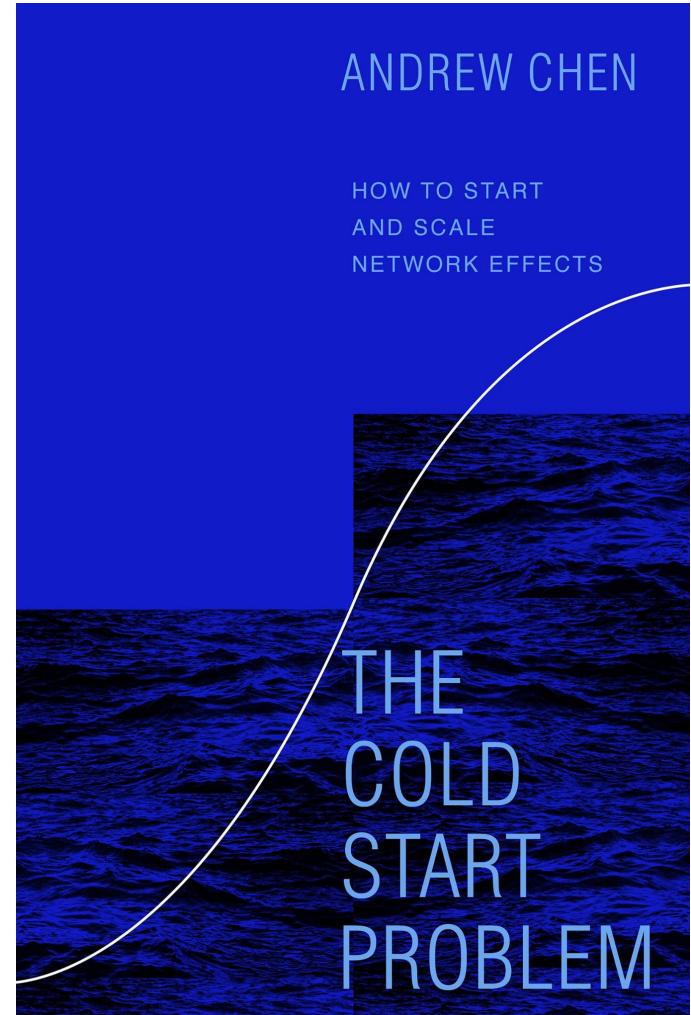
A core tenent of decentralized
identity is that adoption happens
in digital trust ecosystems



For the First Person Project to be successful, we need ecosystems that will support:

- First Person identifiers
- First Person credentials
- First Person wallets & agents

But what will motivate
ecosystems to adopt?
How do we solve
the cold start problem?



Governments



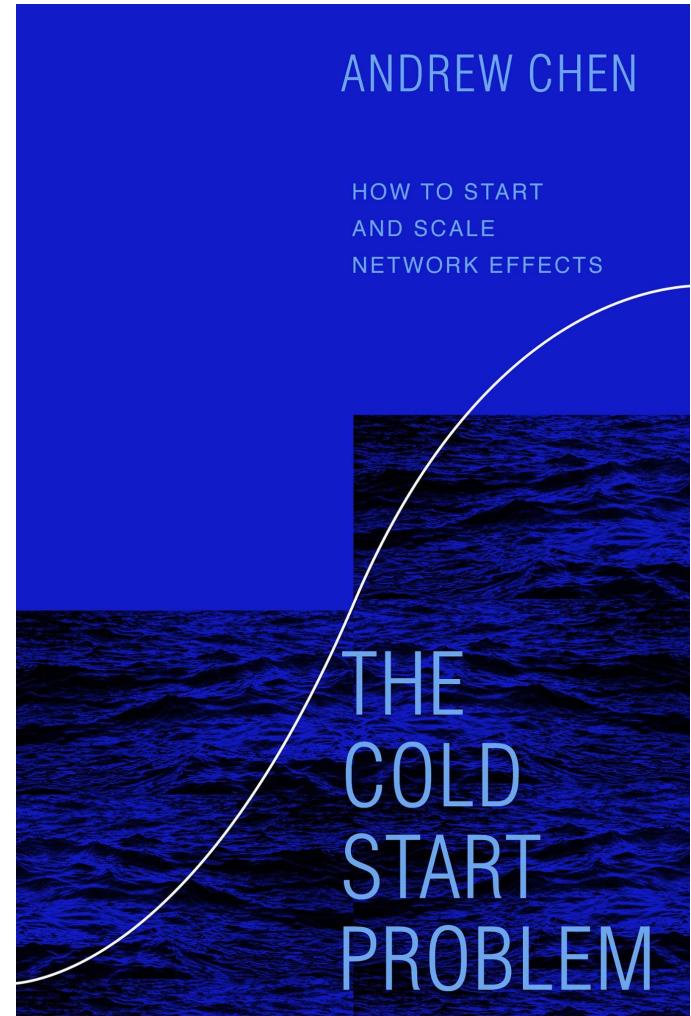
THIS IS THE HARD PART!

People

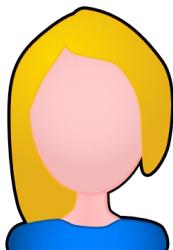
As hard as the problem looks,
we can scale this mountain
with a **three prong strategy**.

The first prong of this bottom-up strategy is right there in the name of “The First Person Project”: **start with people.**

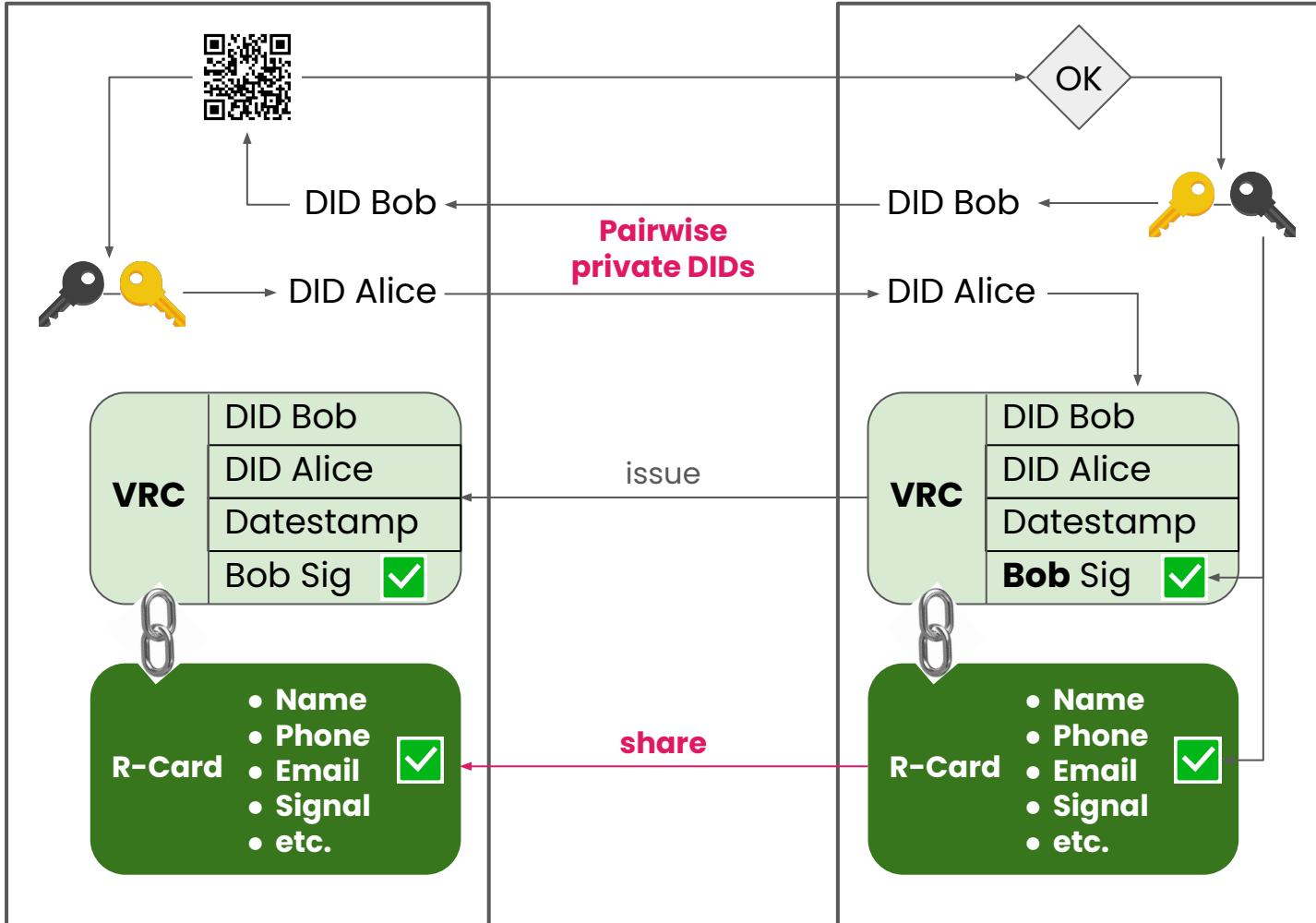
Do exactly what Reid Hoffman did to start LinkedIn: people inviting people in their own personal trust networks.



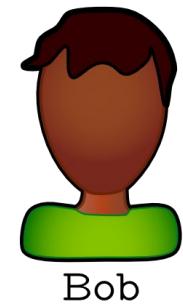
Alice's Wallet



Alice



Bob's Wallet



Bob



Governments



People

The second prong in the bottom-up strategy prong follows naturally:
people inviting communities



Open Source Security, Trust and Innovation: Rapidly Colliding Issues

Jim Zemlin - Executive Director, Linux Foundation



THE LINUX FOUNDATION
MEMBER SUMMIT



We need decentralized trust systems



The **First Person Project** answers one of the
oldest and hardest problems on the Internet:

***proving you are a real person
with real trust relationships***



Recently however there has been both technology progress and urgency

Personhood credentials:
Artificial intelligence and the value of
privacy-preserving tools to distinguish who is real online

Steven Adler,^{*†1} Zoë Hitzig,^{*†1,2} Shrey Jain,^{*†3} Catherine Brewer,^{*4} Wayne Chang,^{*5} Renée DiResta,^{*25} Eddy Lazzarin,^{*6} Sean McGregor,^{*7} Wendy Seltzer,^{*8} Divya Siddarth,^{*9} Nouran Soliman,^{*10} Tobin South,^{*10} Connor Spelliscy,^{*11} Manu Sporny,^{*12} Varya Srivastava,^{*4} John Bailey,¹³ Brian Christian,⁴ Andrew Critch,¹⁴ Ronnie Falcon,¹⁵ Heather Flanagan,²⁵ Kim Hamilton Duffy,¹⁶ Eric Ho,¹⁷ Claire R. Leibowicz,¹⁸ Srikanth Nadhamuni,¹⁹ Alan Z. Rozenshtein,²⁰ David Schnurr,¹ Evan Shapiro,²¹ Lacey Strahm,¹⁵ Andrew Trask,^{4,15} Zoe Weinberg,²² Cedric Whitney,²³ Tom Zick²⁴

¹OpenAI, ²Harvard Society of Fellows, ³Microsoft, ⁴University of Oxford, ⁵SpruceID, ⁶a16z crypto,

⁷UL Research Institutes, ⁸Tucows, ⁹Collective Intelligence Project, ¹⁰Massachusetts Institute of Technology, ¹¹Decentralization Research Center, ¹²Digital Bazaar, ¹³American Enterprise Institute,

¹⁴Center for Human-Compatible AI, University of California, Berkeley, ¹⁵OpenMined,

¹⁶Decentralized Identity Foundation, ¹⁷Goodfire, ¹⁸Partnership on AI, ¹⁹eGovernments Foundation,

²⁰University of Minnesota Law School, ²¹Mina Foundation, ²²ex/ante, ²³School of Information, University of California, Berkeley, ²⁴Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University, ²⁵Independent Researcher

August 2024



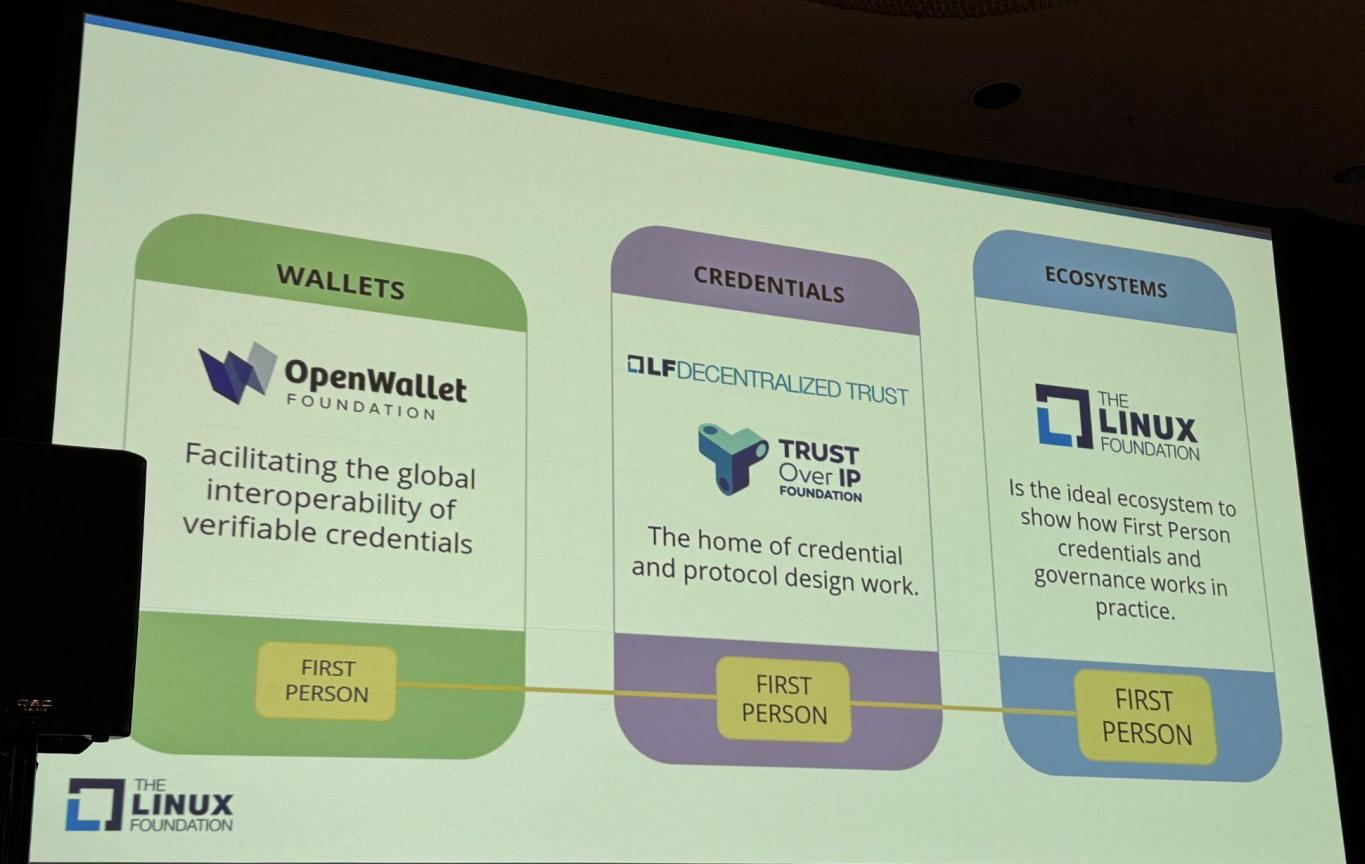
Why is open source a good place to invest
in this type of infrastructure first?



OSS is a good place to start

- Developers want it
 - The Linux Kernel already requires identity and trust - they just use old school methods and are looking for an upgrade
- OSS Devs can provide rapid technical feedback and optimization
- There is a trackable public history of OSS code that is critical to society
- **Permissionless Entry and Worldwide Participation** are cornerstones of OSS - **TRUST MUST BE ANOTHER**



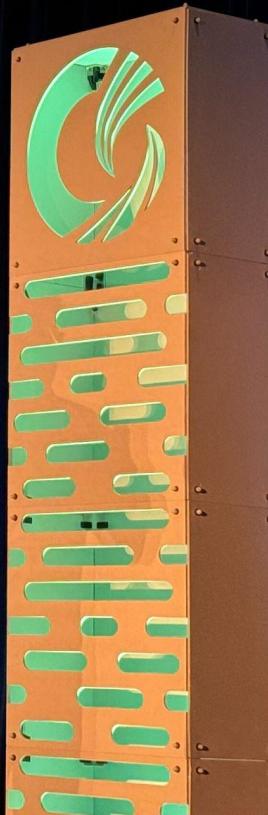


OSS is a good place to start

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THE
LINUX
FOUNDATION
MEMBER
SUMMIT



The Linux Foundation — starting with the Linux Kernel project — is an incredible adoption vector.

They now have over 1500 open source projects with over 17,000 participating companies.

There are at least another dozen
communities that are likely
early adopters.

Governments



People

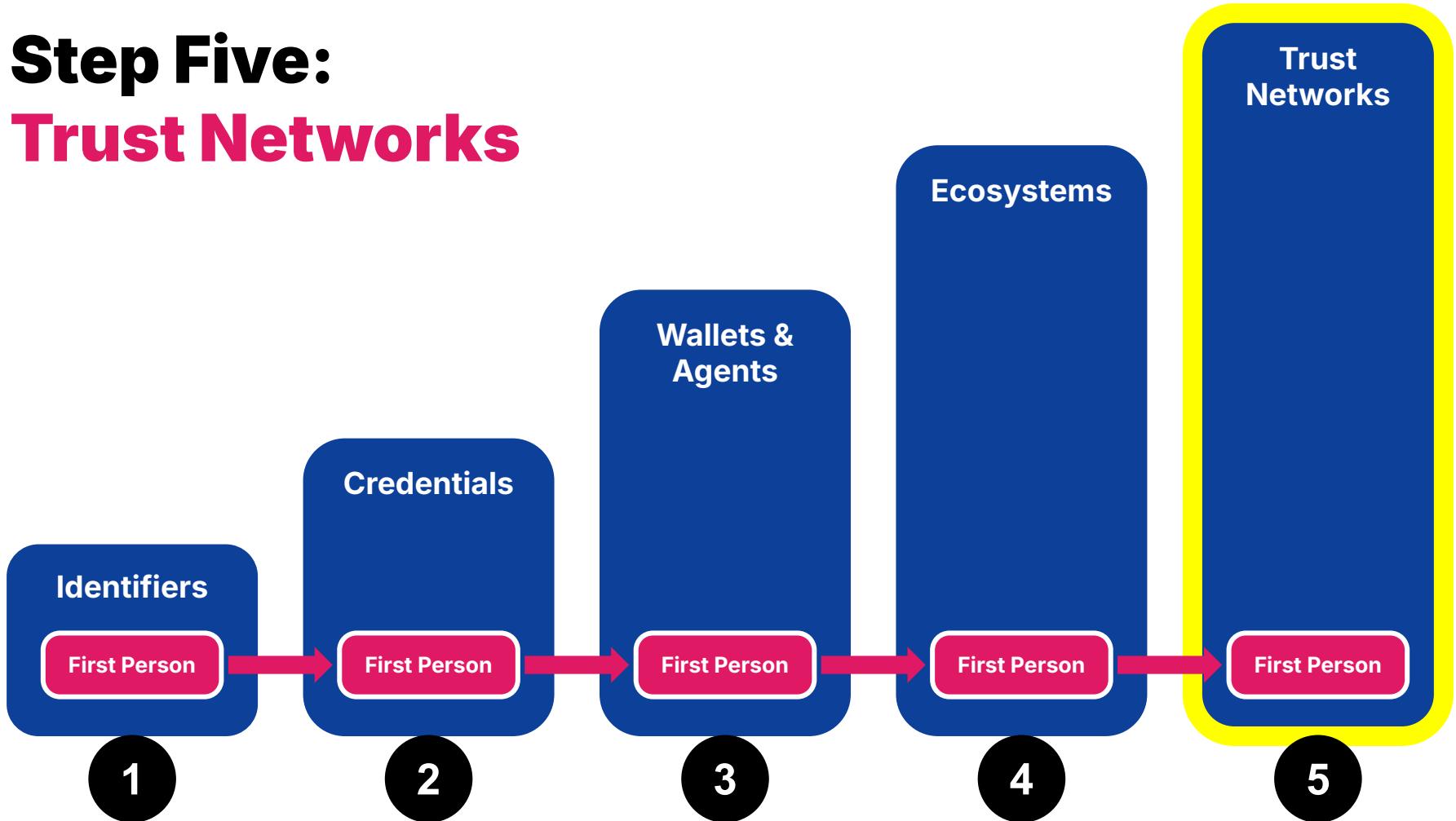
So are we going to be able to
attract some ecosystems to adopt
First Person technologies?



But will this be enough?

Thankfully, there is a **third prong**
of our bottom-up strategy.

Step Five: Trust Networks



Trust networks enable trust
relationships **across ecosystems.**

Ayra (eye-rah)



**Enabling the growth of safe, secure,
interoperable, and sustainable digital
trust ecosystems that connect and
enrich our world.**

Ecosystems & Ayra

Trust Registries

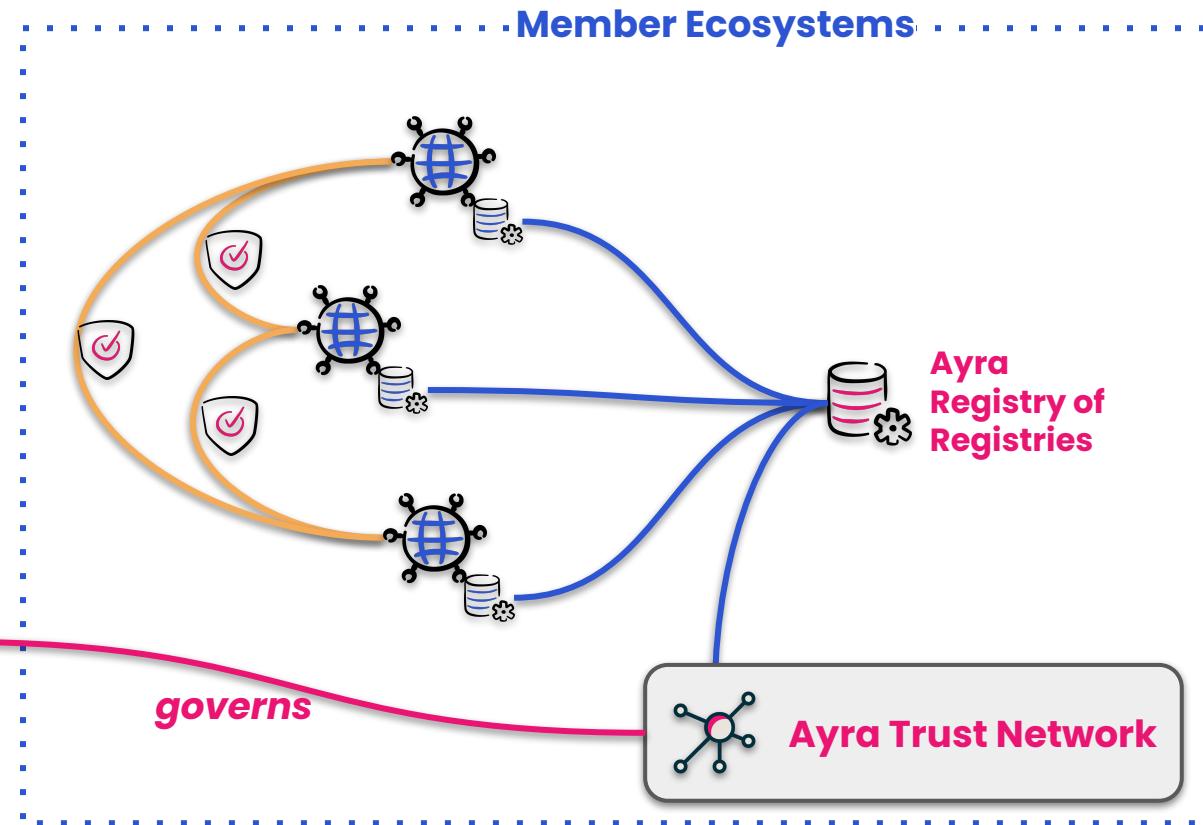
Conformant Exchange



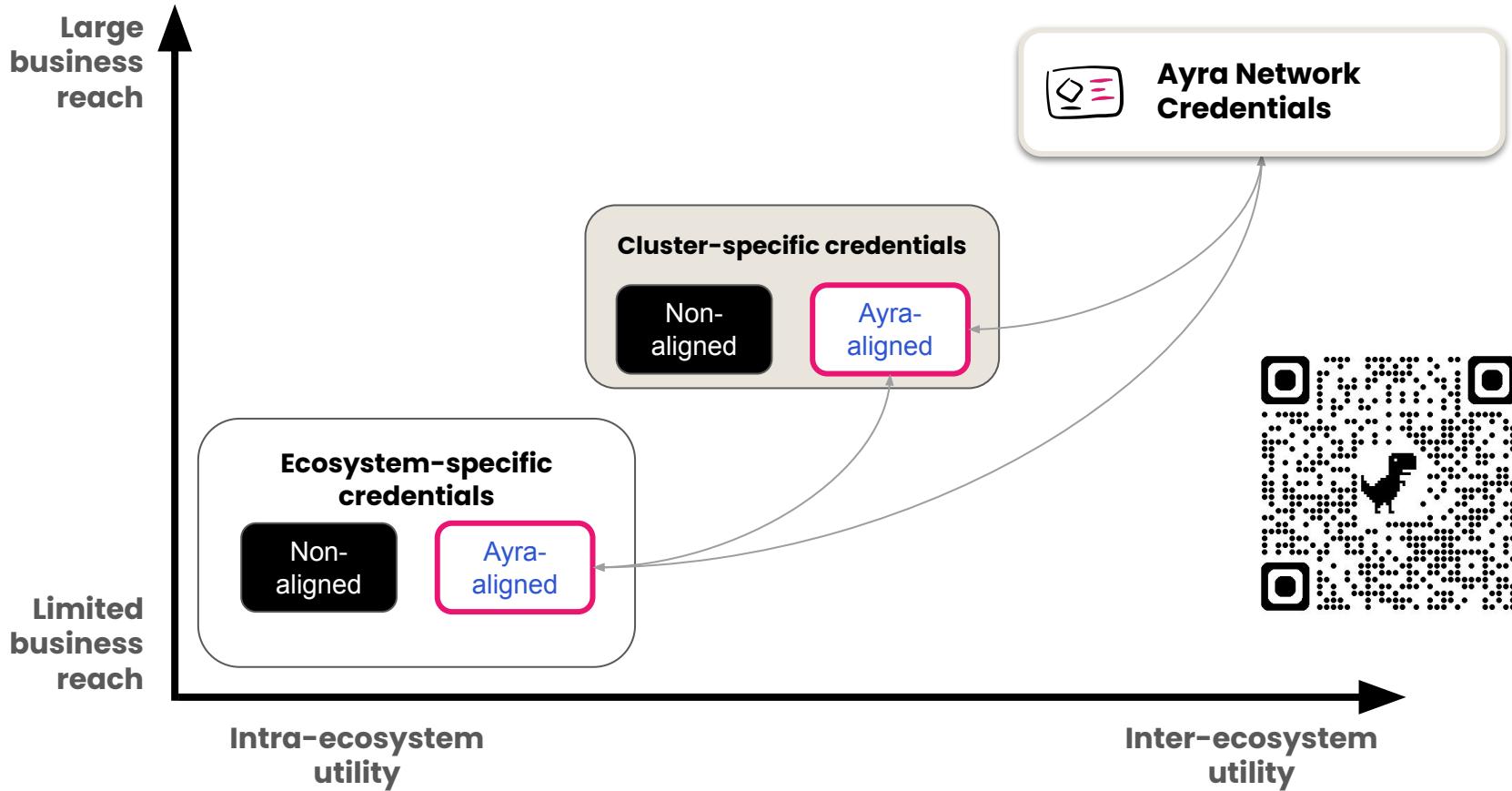
Ayra Conformance Test Suite

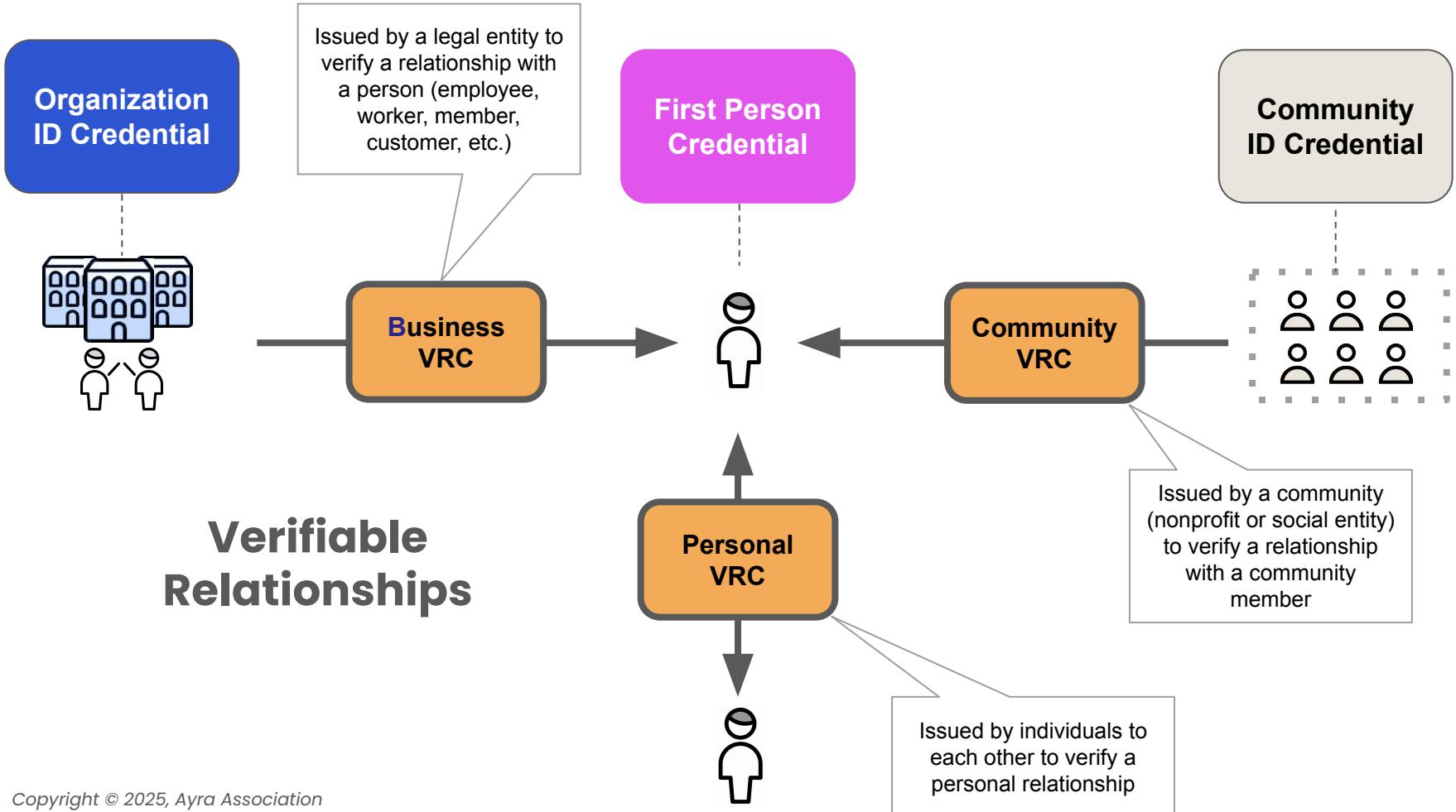


Ayra Association



Ayra Network Credentials





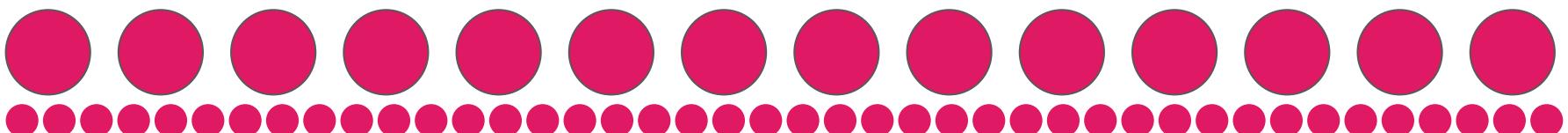
With Ayra, we can actually create a
trust network of trust networks
consisting entirely of First Person
verified relationships.

This is the First Person Network.

So how do we maximize the
First Person Network effect?
What is the incentive to join?

Governments

The First Person Network Cooperative



People

Cooperative? Really?

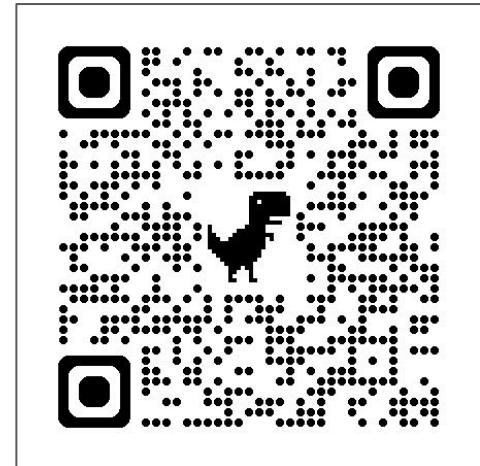
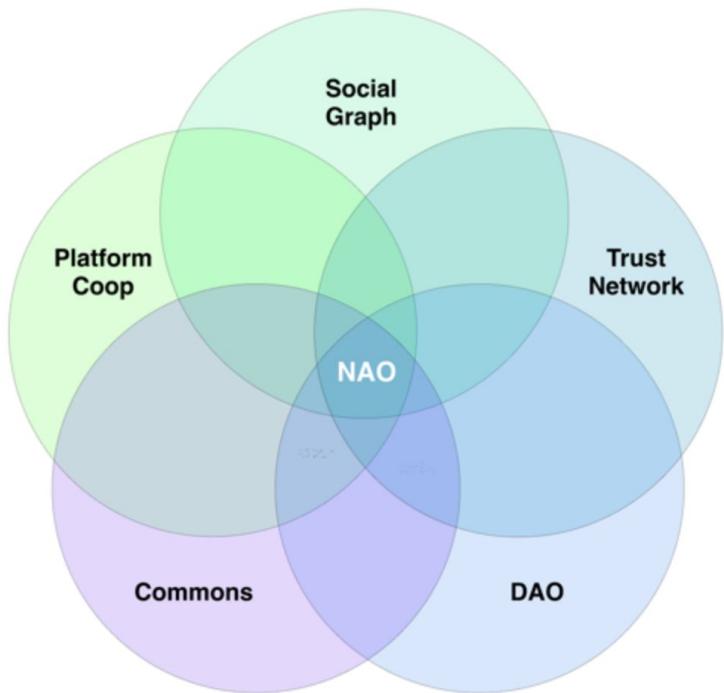
The idea comes from Brad deGraf.

NooNAO

Toward Wise Emergent Coordination for a Less Bad Future

Networked Adaptive Organisms (NAOs)

Network Cooperatives, Bioregional Mycelia, Portable Communities, Social Brains



What is a Network Cooperative?

Purpose

The purpose of a Network Cooperative is to aggregate the agency and value of its membership and to provide unique coordination and governance capacities.

Why?

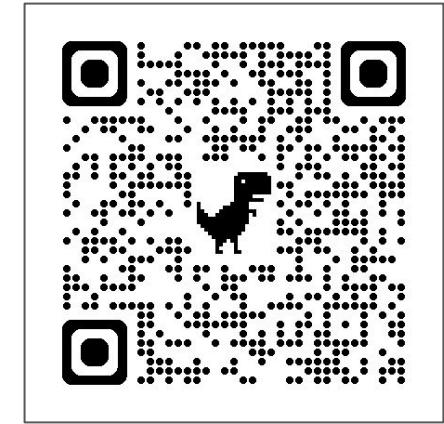
The work of dealing with the **Metacrisis** requires rising above our current broken systems. Humanity needs dramatically higher levels of global coordination that can outcompete those systems by being better at sensemaking, decision-making, collective action, and superorganism behavior.

Such capabilities will undoubtedly be built on social graphs, the "neural networks" of the noosphere, the *social substrate* on which innovation can happen.

And by definition, such a social substrate **cannot** be yet another corporate enclosure.

Thus, we must grow a **commons social graph** that can:

- aggregate the collective agency and value of its participants
- provide unique coordination and governance capacities, and
- distribute its collective value optimally for its membership



When you stop to think about it:
who else is going to build and
deploy and support and sustain
first person technologies?

If a core issue with today's social platforms is that people are the **product...**

...then the only way to achieve
100% alignment of incentives
with first person technologies...

... is for people to be the **owners**.

Not just the owners of their own
personal relationship graphs,
but the owners of the entire
First Person Network Cooperative
as a social utility.

A new social utility.

Completely decentralized.

Delivering first person technologies.

Exclusively to people.

To build personal trust relationships.

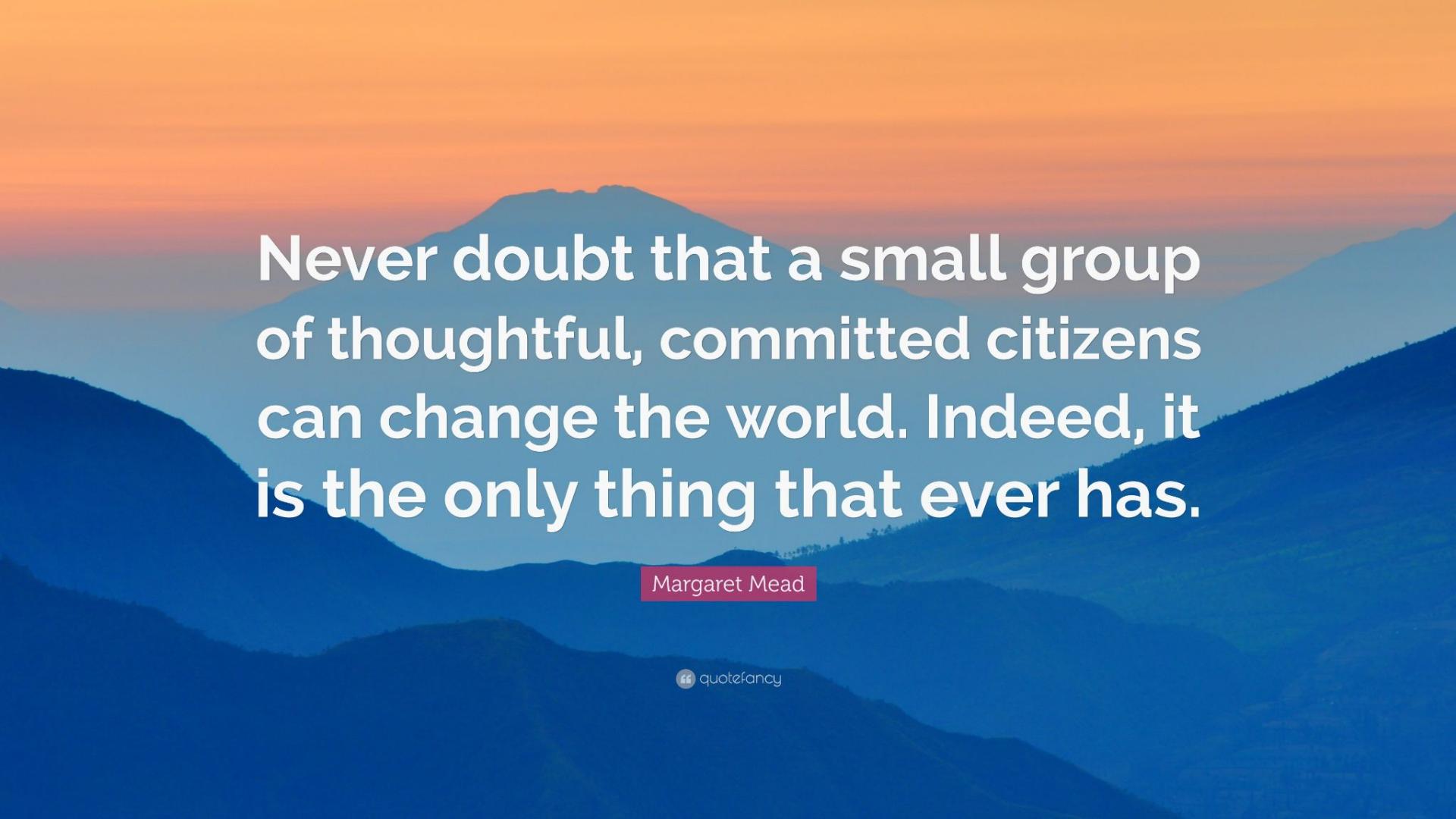
Everywhere.

When?

Now!

Who?

Us!

The background of the image is a photograph of a mountain range during sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow hues near the horizon, which transition into cooler blues and purples higher up. Silhouettes of mountain peaks are visible against the bright sky.

**Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful, committed citizens
can change the world. Indeed, it
is the only thing that ever has.**

Margaret Mead

Who can join us?

You!

Please join the First Person Project mailing list!

Groups.io Your Groups ▾ Find or Create a Group Help Drummond Reed ▾

Home Owner

Subscription

Admin

Messages

New Topic

Drafts

New Poll

Hashtags

Chats

Directory

Calendar

Photos

Files

Databases

Wiki

ctrl + shift + ? for shortcuts

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first-person-project@groups.io

This group is for members supporting formation of the First Person Project as a social utility for personal trust relationships. See the description of First Person Credentials in the Ayra Association white paper: <https://ayra.forum/ayra-network-effects-whitepaper/>

Group Information

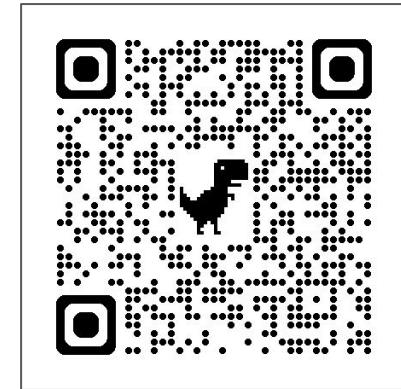
1 Member
Started on 8:18pm
[RSS Feed](#)

Group Email Addresses

Post: first-person-project@groups.io
Subscribe: first-person-project+subscribe@groups.io
Unsubscribe: first-person-project+unsubscribe@groups.io
Group Owner: first-person-project+owner@groups.io
Help: first-person-project+help@groups.io

Group Settings

- >All members can post to the group.
- Posts to this group do not require approval from the moderators.
- Messages are set to reply to group.
- Subscriptions to this group require approval from the moderators.
- Archive is visible to anyone.
- Wiki is visible to members only.
- Members can edit their messages.
- Members can set their subscriptions to no email.



Together, we can do this.



Thank you.

How do we prevent Sybil attacks? By anchoring in **ecosystems**.

