

## PIT Regional Hub Development Guide

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# PIT REGIONAL HUB DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

BASED ON THE EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC  
INTEREST TECHNOLOGY - NEW ENGLAND

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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Public Interest Technology - New England (PIT-NE) is a regional hub for Public Interest Technology (PIT) established in 2023. In its first year, PIT-NE sought to answer the question:

*What does it mean to be a PIT regional hub?*

This guide provides insights from their efforts and questions for a group to discuss as they begin to develop a regional hub. This guide is not prescriptive as there is no “one size fits all” model for PIT regional hubs.

PIT-NE started as a regional meetup for academics who were seeking to advance PIT efforts at their institutions. These casual events allowed the group to identify a set of shared values and goals that they wanted to work towards together. The group acknowledged instead of building programs siloed at their individual institutions, it would be more beneficial to pool resources to create regional programs that could create a larger impact by leveraging existing resources. Volunteer efforts alone would not be enough to achieve this mission so the group decided to start PIT-NE and hired a full time executive director to kick off efforts.

PIT-NE strives to become a consortium that includes individuals from academia, non-profits, government, and the private sector who use the regional hub’s infrastructure to grow collaborative PIT programs that develop a responsible technology workforce for the region. PIT-NE seeks to be independent of any single institution by moving from its initial location in academic institutions to a fiscally sponsored organization to a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Please keep this context in mind as you use this guide. Regional hubs are intended to meet the needs of the region and its members so your regional hub model may look different.

# **TRANSITIONING TO A REGIONAL HUB**

PIT-NE transitioned to a regional hub from a small community that understood each other's missions and values. In taking the step to become a regional hub, the group had to answer the following questions.

## **WHO IS THIS HUB MEANT TO BENEFIT?**

Consider which sectors you hope to engage, the type of expertise you may seek, the shared values members should have, and more.

## **HOW CAN MEMBERS BENEFIT FROM THE HUB AND BOOST THEIR OWN SUCCESS?**

This question is key to ensuring that members of the hub find value in contributing to hub efforts and membership is sustainable.

## **HOW CAN MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR HUB?**

Regional hubs are meant to leverage existing expertise and resources so the answer to this question will help you plan and execute efforts.

## **WHERE ARE GAPS OR OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH IN YOUR REGION?**

To best serve your region, it is important to understand who is currently being served and where your hub can enhance PIT efforts.

# COMPONENTS OF A REGIONAL HUB

A PIT regional hub requires more structure than a casual meetup of people who are committed to advancing the field of PIT. In forming this structure, PIT-NE found that the following components were necessary.

Generic Regional Hub Component	PIT-NE Component
Dedicated Staff	Executive Director
Regular Meetings	All Hands Meeting, twice a year, in person
Organizational Structure	Members (individuals committed to advancing PIT through their work), initiative groups led by members, leadership committee
Shared values and preferred outcomes	Workforce development
Mechanism for change	Synergistic programming
Funding	In-kind support, grants

# ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

The dedicated staff for your hub will need to provide administrative support to ensure members are engaged and there are mechanisms to achieve your goals through the hub. Based on PIT-NE's experience, staff should expect to engage in the following.

## OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

In the initial stages of a regional hub, effort must be dedicated to recruitment and outreach. New members need to understand the mission and benefits of the hub to become invested. Dedicated outreach also allows you to ensure the efforts of the hub align with the needs of your members.

## COMMUNICATION

Establishing consistent modes of communication is vital for updating your members on hub development along with creating a culture of transparency. This could look like a quarterly or monthly newsletter, listservs, website, social media, or other tools. Included in this effort is the creation of materials like one-pagers to distribute to promote your hub.

## FUNDRAISING AND BUDGETING

Regional hubs must be prepared to fundraise for costs that cannot be covered by in-kind support. This can include staff, program costs, travel, and more. Hub staff should work with their members to understand their relations with funders to inform fundraising conversations.

## INITIATIVE COORDINATION

Once regional hubs decide on initiatives that they will pursue together, the regional hub staff will be tasked with coordinating the members involved in the effort and removing the barriers that typically prevent cross-institution collaboration. This requires extensive knowledge of the ecosystems where resources come from and the ability to craft innovative solutions.



# RESOURCES TO SUSTAIN HUB ACTIVITIES

Funding for regional hubs is needed to ensure that activities can be supported beyond volunteer efforts. There are some resources you may find helpful to support your regional hub.

## DEDICATED STAFF

Dedicated staff provide administrative support to regional hubs as described on page 4.

## STUDENT INTERNS

Students are highly interested in PIT and can provide support for research, marketing, outreach, and more.

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION COSTS

Efforts may require funding for food, space, or supplies.

## PROGRAMMING STAFF

Hub staff likely will not have the bandwidth to support large programs so additional staff is needed.

## TRAVEL

Travel should accommodate both the hub staff to go to events to promote the region as well as hub members to gather in person.

## DISSEMINATION SUPPORT

If your hub conducts research, develops curriculum, or builds best practice tools you would like to share, then funding for dissemination support may be needed.

## GRANT ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

If your hub applied for grants, then hub staff will likely need support with the budget and reporting.

## IN-KIND SUPPORT

Members' in-kind support is fundamental to the success of the regional hub. In providing the above resources, you will likely strengthen your network of in-kind support.

## NEUTRAL BANK ACCOUNT

As your hub progresses, you may seek a neutral bank account through a fiscal sponsor or non-profit status to ensure that the hub does not feel like it is owned by one institution.

## PIT-NE LESSONS LEARNED

PIT-NE's first year of work provided many valuable experiences resulting in concrete lessons learned which are shared below. These should be considered as you plan the structure of your hub and start to think about sustainability.

### **Volunteer efforts are not enough**

To achieve the goals of a regional hub and properly support collaborative efforts, dedicated staff is required. Volunteers are sufficient to organize a PIT meet-up, but not a hub.

### **A dedicated staff allows you to be adaptable & detail oriented**

Many opportunities arise for the hub to support efforts around the region and having a dedicated staff allows hubs to provide high quality materials and further establish the hub as a cornerstone for the region.

### **Regional hubs can help each other**

The network of regional hub leads can provide each other support through sharing best practices, lessons learned, and ideas for local funding sources.

### **Don't try to move too quickly**

The purpose of regional hubs is to provide infrastructure for regional efforts so piloting one or two programs to start will allow your hub to establish the infrastructure that works best for your region.

### **Bottom-up structure creates shared ownership but hubs still need to build top-down support**

PIT-NE's model includes individuals as members, as opposed to institutions, which allows members to feel closely engaged with regional efforts. However, administrative support from institutions is still necessary for institutionalizing PIT in the region.

### **Organizational structure must accommodate turnover in leaders, members, and staff**

In academia, leadership turnover is not uncommon so the hub structure must be built to support individuals throughout those transitions. PIT-NE has also seen hub members transition to new institutions and our structure has allowed them to continue their engagement in the hub.





2024 PIT-NE Impact Technology Fellows

## FINAL WORDS

Regional hubs are an emerging mechanism for advancing PIT as they provide regions with the ability to build an infrastructure that best suits their shared goals. The formation of a regional hub is a large investment that requires thoughtful planning and dedicated resources while the hub establishes its membership and structure.

Building a regional hub is an iterative process that will take time as you construct the ideal model for your region. By centering PIT values and uniting on a common mission, regional hubs can make an impact on their communities and contribute to the institutionalization of PIT.

To learn more about PIT-NE and their latest initiatives, visit [pitne.org](https://pitne.org).

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