FAIRsFAIR
16 Feb 2022 .
In 2020 FAIRsFAIR selected 10 repositories from an open call to receive support in CoreTrustSeal certification. At the end of this programme, repositories were asked to reflect on the experience through a survey and interviews with the FAIRsFAIR team.

This post offers advice from the FAIRsFAIR supported repositories for repositories considering a CoreTrustSeal application.

A great start is to reflect on the importance of certification. Do you really need it? If so, is high-level management support there to pursue it? It will take people's time and it requires coordination, so a push from the top helps and project management skills are critical to success.

The right approach

Making a good start is important. One repository found: "The level of difficulty you perceive [applying for CoreTrustSeal] is a direct reflection of your level of knowledge and expertise". A structured approach to take can be reviewing the questions in the CoreTrustSeal guide and identifying documentation required or actions needed to give you an idea of where to focus efforts. This also includes identifying who in the organisation needs to be involved and doing some reviews of the internal and external policy landscape. Preparing critical items like identifying your designated community, and scoping a preservation policy is seen as useful by the participating repositories. Using applications shared by others on the CoreTrustSeal website is a great starting point for applying.

Repositories were asked to estimate how long they spent preparing their applications. This estimation is difficult to provide as it is influenced by many different factors: the initial maturity of the documentation, the number of people and resources available to dedicate to the process, the choice to include more advanced topics and improve aspects of the repository that go beyond the scope of the CoreTrustSeal requirements - but a rough indication of the time involved can be seen from the non-trivial range of responses: from two weeks to 10-14 weeks, with one repository still ongoing with preparing an application.

Certification is a journey

One of the recurring lessons learned is that the value of CoreTrustSeal isn't just in the destination, but the journey. "Obtaining the certification is not the end goal", said one participant. "Focus should be on fostering awareness and consciousness on the topics and aligning your internal operations with those needed for a trustworthy repository and then the certification will come", they added.

An example of a tangible benefit of this journey is how "The application is a great document for new employees. It provides an overview of all the inner workings of the organisation and the plans for the future".

Applying for CoreTrustSeal is a "very useful exercise for making your repository up to date", said one participant. Application answers are aspirational so "If you're not at the right level yet, you will have a clear vision on what to work on in the next couple of years". And "as you develop, the application will become increasingly more easy to comprehend" is the lesson from one participant.

Let's leave the final words to the participant, whose number one piece of advice to repositories considering certification is:

"Do it! Even if, in the end, you can't make a successful application, your repository's value will be improved by the process."

This series complements deliverable 4.3 Report on the certification support and guidance for repositories and reviewers, which describes the support programme, challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations made by the FAIRsFAIR team. Learn about the Repository Support Programme on the FAIRsFAIR website.

```php
<?php// print render($content['links']); ?>
```