

Activity: Value Proposition for RSSN Service Providers

Goals

- Identify shared pain points across provider units that the RSSN can collectively address
- Articulate the specific benefits that service providers gain by participating in the RSSN
- Produce a set of value proposition statements that can support provider recruitment, governance design, and internal advocacy

Prerequisites

- Needs analysis: RSE and RWS surveys, focus groups, 1:1 interviews
- Activity: Defining Problem Statements (immediately preceding this activity)

Who Should Participate?

All service providers present at the convening

Activity Instructions

Phase 1: Intro to Value Propositions & bridge from Problem Statements

- Introduce the concept of value propositions: a clear statement that explains how a service solves a user's problem and provides specific benefits. For this activity, the service providers are the users, and the service is the RSSN.
- Introduce the value proposition canvas - two halves, service providers on one side and the RSSN on the other, we hope to find a fit

Phase 2: Build the Provider Profile

Each group (table?) completes a customer profile for a single stakeholder: the research software support provider. For each section, groups should draw on both the problem statement outputs from this morning and their own experience as providers.

1. Jobs: What are you trying to accomplish? Ask providers to think about what they are trying to get done in their work.
 - a. What practical tasks do you need to complete? Examples: Handle requests efficiently and within scope, Route out-of-scope requests to the right place, Demonstrate impact and value to your leadership, Stay informed about what other units are offering
 - b. How do you want to be perceived? Examples: As a credible, well-connected resource for researchers, As a collaborative partner, not a siloed service desk

- c. What would make this work feel sustainable? Examples: Confidence that you're not the last line of defense for every problem, A sense of shared purpose with peer units
2. Pains: What makes this hard today? What are the bad outcomes, risks, and obstacles related to what you're trying to accomplish? Draw from the problem statements generated during the morning activity. Groups can add additional pains.
 - a. Examples: Receiving poorly scoped or misdirected requests, Duplicating effort across units without knowing it, No clear mechanism to refer requests to the right partner, Difficulty communicating scope boundaries to researchers, Limited visibility into what gaps exist across the institution
3. Gains: Describe the outcomes providers would like to achieve or the concrete benefits they are seeking.
 - a. Examples: Requests arrived well-scoped, research leave feeling helped, team time goes to impact vs. triage, unit funding is stable/increasing, RSE work is understood outside the unit, RSE work is cited/shared, personal satisfaction - working on interesting problems, not burning out

Phase 3: Map the Value Proposition

Each group now fills in the other side of the canvas: what the RSSN can offer that addresses the profile they just built.

1. Products & Services: What can the RSSN provide to its member units?
 - a. Examples: A structured referral and routing system, A shared service catalog (visible to providers as well as researchers), Working groups for coordination, assessment, and gap discovery, A regular forum for cross-unit communication, Shared language and framing for communicating with researchers about scope
2. Pain Relievers: How can/will the RSSN address provider pains?
 - a. For each major pain identified in Phase 2, groups should describe specifically how the RSSN will address it. Be concrete — “coordination” is not enough. What mechanism? What change in workflow?
3. Gain Creators: How does the RSSN deliver on provider gains?
 - a. For each gain identified in Phase 2, describe how the RSSN can/will deliver or enable it. Pay special attention to the unexpected gains — these are often the most persuasive when talking to leadership.

Phase 4: Assess fit and surface gaps

Group discussion questions:

- Where are the strongest connections between provider needs and what the RSSN will offer?
- Are there pains the RSSN doesn't plan to address? Name them — these are design inputs for the Working Groups activity.
- Are there things the RSSN proposes to do that don't actually address any provider pain or gain? These may be worth deprioritizing.
- Which problem statements from this morning still have no corresponding pain reliever or gain creator on any canvas? These represent the gaps the network needs to own collectively.

Phase 5: Writing Value Proposition Statements - if time allows

Each group drafts a value proposition statement for service providers. This statement should be something a provider could realistically say to their own department head to explain and justify their participation in the RSSN.

Use this formula:

Participating in the RSSN helps **[your unit/role]** which currently struggles with **[key pain]** by **[what the RSSN provides]**, making it possible to **[gain]**. Unlike going it alone, the network means **[what becomes possible through collective action]**.

Example:

"Participating in the RSSN helps our research computing team, which currently has no good way to route out-of-scope software requests, by giving us a trusted referral network and shared intake language — making it possible to close the loop with researchers instead of just saying no. Unlike going it alone, the network means we can collectively identify gaps and make the case to leadership for resources none of us could justify individually."

Refine and Share

- Each group reads their statement aloud. The room listens for: clarity, specificity, and whether it would actually land with a department head.
- Identify the 2–3 themes that appear across multiple statements — these form the core of the RSSN's provider-facing value proposition.
- Note any significant differences between groups — these may reflect real variation in what different units need from the network.