

Future of the User Board for GridPP4

Introduction

The Experiments Board (EB) ran from 24 July 2001 to 29 June 2004 with 13 meetings. This was then succeeded by the User Board (UB) in September 2004 and there have been 17 meetings to date. The current terms of reference are:

1. Ensure that the GridPP project remains science driven and that the project develops to meet the needs of the UK Particle Physics community.
2. Keep an overview of both technical and experimental software developments, ensuring these developments are compatible.
3. Facilitate close working relationships between the UK experimental collaborations to identify common areas for the development of Grid-enabled experimental software.
4. Overview the major hardware purchases within GridPP to ensure compatibility with the needs of the experimental collaborations and between collaborations.
5. Promote the use of the developing Grid structures for a wide variety of computing needs in the whole of the UK Particle Physics community.

As the LHC and experiments have reached operation and GridPP has evolved through its different phases, some of these have gradually become redundant. For example, the scientific focus (TOR 1) and the necessary software developments (TOR 2) are essentially decided. There is still scope for identifying common areas of Grid-enabled experimental software (TOR 3), but this is mainly restricted to applying existing software (e.g. Ganga) to new experiments or emerging communities. Hardware purchasing for the Tier 1 (TOR 4) is now delegated to the Hardware Advisory Group (HAG), which has direct experiment input. The promotion of Grid computing in the UK PP community (TOR 5) clearly happens, but it does not really need a formal body to do this.

GridPP4 Functions

For the future, we can identify the following key functions:

- a. Allocation of resources within the higher-level strategic levels agreed through the PMB. These need to be done quarterly and sometimes adjusted on shorter timescales to deal with priority requests (e.g. conferences).
- b. Providing an interface to those projects/experiments not normally represented on the PMB (includes ALICE).
- c. Agreeing and prioritising any user support effort (declining).
- d. Reporting on Grid performance, etc., for the other experiments (e.g. quarterly reports and OSC status reports).

Commenting on the above points, much of this work is now done by discussing requests and requirements directly with the experiments. The quarterly T1 resource meetings are now also underway and these give the opportunity for projects to provide extra input into the process.

Moreover, it is worth noting that communication with the smaller experiments is made more of a challenge in the current climate with regular departures of key contacts. Other experiments clearly struggle to exploit the Tier 1 with very limited manpower and a more lightweight management approach seems appropriate in GridPP4.

GridPP4 Proposal

Given the above, the idea of a few formal “board” meetings each year is probably no longer relevant in the GridPP4 era. The EB/UB has worked well in the lead up to LHC operation, but we are now very much at the stage where experiments expect to be able to use the Grid like any other computer system. In particular, more urgency is expected in dealing with both operational and strategic issues than on a quarterly basis.

The following is therefore suggested as a more flexible and responsive approach:

1. Direct contacts need to be identified within each of the projects exploiting the UK Grid to form the **User Group**. This already exists (the UB list), but will need refreshing. Where there is no obvious contact, the UK Spokesperson can be consulted.
2. A person needs to be responsible for communicating with the non-LHC experiments and capturing and planning their ongoing hardware requirements alongside the LHC requirements i.e. the **User Group Co-ordinator**.
3. There should be a regular slot in the weekly GridPP PMB meetings, where it is advertised and well known that projects can raise issues and requests through the User Group Co-ordinator.
4. The User Group Co-ordinator should chair the quarterly Tier 1 resource meetings to agree hardware allocations and priorities.
5. Opportunities should be taken to engage the wider UK particle physics community (not just the usual LHC audience). This may be most easily done through the GridPP Collaboration meetings, which are held twice a year at different venues and therefore have the potential to interact with local non-LHC research groups.

The transition to this new arrangement should start in 2011/Q1. This would give some experience before the start of GridPP4.