Transcript of ISO webinar with Dr Neil James

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Okay. Today's speaker has been advocating for plain language for more than two decades now. He's the current chair of the International Plain Language Federation, and he's the former president of Plain. Please, Doctor Neil James, the virtual floor is all yours. Thank you very much. And welcome, everybody. I'm coming to you today from sunny Queensland in Australia. I'm on Kabi Kabi Country in the Sunshine Coast.

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And I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land that I'm on and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future. Two purposes today. One is I've been asked to update, through this webinar, activities of the International Plain Language Federation and, the developments in ISO standards. But more importantly, I'd like to answer the questions that, you have out in the community about, all of that activity and, first of all, thank you to everyone.

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When you registered who submitted some questions because I've been able to, tailor the presentation to answer as many of the questions that you submitted. We got quite a few, which was, terrific. Showing a strong level of interest in what, what we're doing. But I also want to get some feedback about, some of your thinking, we've always, with the Federation, tried to get input from the community at every step of the way.

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So I'm going to we're going to try and do a few few polls as we go through, and just to do a test

run of this, it's just a simple question to ask you just how familiar you are with, what the Federation is doing at the moment. And, the ISO standard and, just if you can, fill this out. Farida is running the polls, so she will, she will end the poll and we'll have a quick look at the answer that it's partly a test run of using the polls as well.

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So.

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Okay. And Farida let me know when you're closing off.

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All right. And then we share the results. Okay. So we, have a pretty even split across, level of familiarity. So, nobody's coming here knowing nothing about the topic, but we still have some not very familiar. Somewhat, and, only about a quarter. So hopefully by the end of this presentation, if we were to ask the same question, we would be getting, answers more to the top of the tree.

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So as we go through the topics, I'm going to pause and we're going to do these quick poll. So be prepared for them. And not to take up too much time. Try and put your answer in quickly. Okay. So if we can, take that away now Farida. Yeah. Okay. So I'm, I, my theme, I guess, for today is taken from, a concept I guess, really popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in a book a few years ago called The Tipping Point.

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He defined that as a moment where we reach a critical mass, where an idea or a trend or a behavior crosses a threshold and takes off. And I would argue that we're at a kind of a tipping point at the moment with plain language. And really the publication of the first part of the ISO standard 24495 is our threshold event.

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And what that is going to be leading to is accelerated activity in, not only standards, but in potential future certification training and resources and also in ongoing, communication. And so they're the areas that I want to focus on today. I'm going to weight it more towards where your questions were. There were more questions from people in advance around the first two topics.

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So I'm going to spend a bit more time on those, about 60% of the time. But I also want to touch on other areas, that are going to really start to gather pace in the, in the future. So let's start with, let's start with the standard and ISO. We have been debating how to go about establishing a plain language standard for a number of years.

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And five years ago decided that, look, the best way to do this, given where plain language experts, but not necessarily experts on standards, is to partner with an organization that is an expert on standards. And so we decided to partner with ISO, the international body that's made up of a network of 167 individual national standards bodies who manage some 25,000 standards, not quite, but almost 25,000 standards.

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And they're well set up to develop and publish standards. Within ISO, the work is being done by what's called Technical Committee 37, which focuses on language and terminology. So that's responsible for a lot of the translation standards, for example. But we established a working group called Working Group 11 within that is doing the work in developing the plain language standards.

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At the moment, there's about 130 members of that working group from 22 different countries. But also from five, what are called liaison organizations. And that includes, PLAIN, Clarity and the Center for Plain Language that are members of the working group. So it's quite a sizable working group. It does represent quite an international network of people who are working on the standards.

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And really, in that first five years, there was a lot of work in getting all of that set up and, developing the first, the first part, going through the ISO process, and we reached that threshold point last year with the publication of the first part and part one of the standard, establishes the governing principles and guidelines for creating a plain language document.

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But the idea is that will build by adding further parts into a much larger standard. And that's where the activity is really going to take off. The great thing about it is that the definition of plain language that the federation developed, through its member organizations, and believe me, I

was involved in the development of that.

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It took us a few years, as you can imagine, getting a group of plain language practitioners to agree on a 30 word statement is going to be a bit like herding cats, but we did get there. And that definition of plain language about what's involved in plain language, is built into the very foundation of the standard and therefore all of the standards that are going to be built on top of that, it's based on four core principles that readers get what they need, that they can then find, understand and use that information, but in a way that those principles, intersect.

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So that's going to be at the core of, all of these standards that are emerging. The standard part one then breaks down those four principles into 19 guidelines, which then in turn break down to much more detailed, criteria, under each of those, guidelines. But that's a first, first step. So some of you asked, is it being taken up?

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Where is it being used? Well, it it's, it taken, a few months for it to start to populate around the world. It's of course, being sold by, ISO at a, international level. Some standards bodies, such as Canada, the United States are already selling it and and using it through their websites.

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Other standards bodies, such as Australia and South Africa, have adopted it as, their own standards. So in Australia, for example, ISO 24495-1 is also AS 24495-1. It's also in Australia and standard. So there's certainly been good take up in the English speaking world and the way ISO works through its representative standards bodies.

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They then take it up and sell it to their countries and communities. What's taking it a little longer, of course, is in non-English speaking countries, the standard needs to be translated. It needs to be localized, before it's adopted there and that is happening. Most recently in Brazil, the Portuguese version of the standard; Scandinavia, not surprisingly, has, embraced it fairly quickly.

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But also in Spain we have a Spanish translation and more translations are coming. So yes, the standard is, is out, it's being adopted, it's, becoming better known throughout the world. That's

going to accelerate, but more exciting, what's going to accelerate is how we are going to build up that standard from the part one, which is governing principles and guidelines to as many as eight standards in a suite of documents over the next few years.

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Already part two, which is on legal communication has gone through – developing a standard in ISO goes through five stages – it's at one of the late stages, the draft international standard stage, which means that it's likely to be coming out next year. And hopefully in the first half of next year.

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Behind that there is a part on science writing that's reached what's called committee draft stage, which means the draft that will shortly go out to all of the national standards bodies for comment. Then it'll be some time working through that. So, that will be the next one coming through, but hopefully, all going well, also next year, but later next year. The next two, one is at proposal stage one –

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I'll talk about shortly plain language for organizations – and a related standard on notations for business reporting, the standard formats for graphs and charts and tables that, will maximize clarity. Beyond that, there's another three potential standards, one on document design, one on evaluation, and one on standardizing terminology. So, we're settling into what looks like probably two, if all goes well, three standards a year being added to this family of standards.

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So that tipping point of that first standard is likely to then become quite a, a larger suite of documents. Of course. Why does all of that matter? Well, it matters because as practitioners, these are a great way to ensure that your practice is up to the latest in best practice for plain language.

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The standards themselves are reviewed every five years. So, they're a great reference point. Having the authority of a standard, of course, strengthens your credibility when you have those conversations with clients, whether you're a trainer or you're an editor. About it's not just you saying that, you need to improve your sentence length or your document design.

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There is an ISO standard that's been to a very rigorous development process. Organizations, will, benefit from having that authoritative reference point. And of course, at the end of the process, most importantly, the public will benefit from having better quality documents. But, look, we're not naive about, about working with ISO. There are also, and some of you raised this in your questions, there are some flip sides to working with ISO.

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The most notable one is that cost money. It costs money to purchase a standard and to, and to use a standard. At the moment, purchasing it from ISO directly is around about €100. Slightly more than that in US dollars and translates to different currencies, but also different standards bodies around the world have different pricing models.

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So there is some variability. So, you know, let's we need to recognize that there is a there is a cost involved. And that's going to affect the take up, the distribution, the number of people who can read it, and therefore use it. The ISO processes do take time. And it's difficult working with this network – I often referred to it as an autonomous collective.

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It's a slightly anarchic collective in many ways of different national standards, bodies that come together. That takes time in developing a standard as a result. It's also a tricky to measure the impact. It's tricky to get information about how the standards are being distributed. And the last couple of points, there are also issues around – obviously ISO publishes a document,

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they have copyright in that document – so there is a level of control that in working with ISO, we're letting go of. So the way that we want to, maximize is, is to take a strategic approach. So yes, do develop standards through ISO and benefit from what it can bring, but not go exclusively through ISO.

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So today I want to talk about a kind of a layered ecosystem that we're looking to develop where, yes, we do use ISO, but we also have other, levels where we can make resources available for members, of the plain language community and then free for the broader community. So, just to pause for the moment and we might do another, quick little poll.

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I'm interested in your thoughts having, had that brief overview, how important do you think standards are to you as a plain language practitioner?

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Okay. And where?

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I must say, I must congratulate or congratulate you all on the speed at which you are. Answering the poll question. So we're getting, a fairly high we're up about 85%. So, we might just end that one there.

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All right. So, half of us say very important and not quite half of us, reasonably important. So, obviously the majority of us are still very much interested in standards in the work on standards that we're doing. Okay. So the next area that I want to talk about is certification because the first question that people ask after they hear about a standard is, and many of you asked it in your questions, "So when can I be certified?"

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When can I get a certification against that? We've been looking at four areas for certification. But I have to say, certification is a complex beast There are days when I think I regret ever having heard the word certification. It's, something that is not easy to bring about, but there are four areas we're looking at.

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By the way, planning is going to is one of these webinars early next year to do an entire dedicated session on certification. So if you are interested in more details, there'll be a whole session on that specifically. But there are four areas that we're looking at. And to begin, our work on this, we've been running some surveys and some focus groups to, to get a sense from the community about, the demand for certification and what we should prioritize, when it comes to certification.

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And I have to say, some of that was quite sobering. One of the surveys was of organizations and that found that, a lot of the organizations we surveyed there was very, very little in the way of resources for plain language. Almost none had a budget. Hardly any of them measured performance. And only a and a quarter of them didn't even have one single plain language

resource.

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So as a result, we've been doing some work – a certification committee and some of the drafting people from working Group 11 at ISO – have been working on developing a standard for organizations that would set out the kind of content development requirements, but also some of the enabling requirements around strategy, policy planning, evaluation to provide a model for organizations about how to become a plain language organization, how to develop plain language documents.

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And we're at the early stage. It's at a proposal stage with ISO, but we've also published a consultation paper, and this is where we need to hear from you. This is on the Federation's website. And by the way, there'll be a number of links that, I'll refer to throughout, my presentation. We're going to put them up in the chat at the end of my presentation in one block.

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So I'll save you having to write in a. Yeah. They will come up at that point. But one that I would urge everyone to have a look at is the consultation paper on plain language requirements for organizations. There is a paper there that sets out the draft requirements that we could be using and that it also links to a survey where we want to hear from you about these requirements, what you think of them, whether they're feasible, whether organizations...

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And please, also, this is publicly available, unlike, you know, the paywall of other ISO material, you can go and look at the draft materials, circulate it to as many organizations as possible. The real benefit I think of having a standard for organizations is we're looking to make it a requirement standard.

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And under the ISO system requirements are much more stringent and much more measurable than general guidelines. As a result, they can be used for certification. We're also looking at how, how we can then leverage the standard for organizations to enable certification. And that requires three levels. ISO doesn't itself do certification, but it does have a lot of management standards that can be used for certification.

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The organization standard for plain language could also, therefore, chime in with the ISO system. ISO have a network of specialist certification bodies who could then certify against the standard. And it has a network of accreditation bodies that oversee those certification bodies to make sure that they're competent to do so. So that's where we're at with certifying organizations.

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It's still work to do. And looking at the certification, system, but at least there is a standard to certify organizations against in the wings. What about individuals? A number of you asked "when can I be certified as an individual?". Well, again, we were interested in looking at the level of demand and we discovered that there was in fact, significant interest, not surprisingly. Certifying of individuals, however, would likely need to be done outside the ISO system.

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Now, that means we would need to work in two ways. First of all, we need to look at what is the process or the stages. What criteria we would use for certification? And the Federation Certification Committee is starting to map some of these out. What prerequisites there might be. How we would go through certification. What sort of recertification there would be.

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Looking at models of, similar professions. But then in parallel with that, we also need to look at what organization would then do the certification. And is that a role for the federation? Is that a role for another organization that would need to be set up for that? Is that a role for one of a member organizations?

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So there is, a level of interest in individual certification. It's likely to be the second in line of the areas of certification that, to be realistic, there's still quite a lot of work to be done when it comes to documents and training. Well, the, the conclusion is that, look, a lot of people are out there already doing document assessment.

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It's unlikely that's something the federation would get involved in. To compete with that, it's more likely we would be an enabler to, support organizations and individuals by certifying them rather than, doing any sort of certification of documents. Certainly by the federation, but perhaps developing. And we are looking at a possible assessment tool. That might be used by, practitioners out there.

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But importantly, we would need, a requirement standard rather than a guidance standard in the ISO system. In other words, a much tighter, more mandated set of guidelines than the current part one, to be certifying against. And, when it comes to training, interestingly, we ran focus groups here and discovered that there wasn't the same interest in certifying of training on its own, and that it was hard to look at certifying training separate from the individuals or the organizations who are delivering it.

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So a decision is going to focus on those areas for the moment. So survey time again, as I say, it's a very complicated area, but that's a quick overview. I'm interested in just asking the, the quick question. We've got a couple of questions here. First of all, do you see certification as a high priority?

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And if you do what, areas are you interested in? And, documents, organizations, individuals and training and, That will be the, the second question. But first of all, looking at, priority, always useful to take a straw poll and just get a sense of it. Looks like we have a similar kind of mix emerging.

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Okay, so we share the results of of that one. Okay. So we're mostly in the high to reasonable priority. About 20% are neutral and about 10% are low priority okay. So we're still saying generally here a high priority. So perhaps, if we go to number four question Farida. And normally you can see, I think question four when you scroll down I'm sorry.

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Yes I'm sorry. Yes. My mistake. Right. So, okay. All right. So it's interesting that we have certification for organization. Okay. So that matches our experience. And the surveys that we've done that organizations, and individuals, that followed by documents and by training.

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Okay. So they were they, they were the key areas that I wanted to cover. But I do want to talk about, other areas of the Federation's activity. And particularly these are the two levels of what I'm calling the layered information ecosystem, the resources banks that we're looking at for making, other information available to members.

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And also, the federation's website. And one of the first resources that we've been working on is training guidelines. And we we ran a survey last year on this as well, and got some really valuable feedback on what should be in training guidelines. And we discovered that, in fact, it varied a great deal depending on, who was the user of those guidelines.

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We had a number of participants from organizations that were the hirers of trainers who gave us very valuable feedback on how difficult they found it to actually find trainers and assess, trainers that they, that they were establishing for a program, learners, of course, in, at the other side told us they wanted lots of tools and practical examples, but particularly information about how to implement plain language and navigate organizational, politics and, and priorities.

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As a result of that, we came to the conclusion that, in fact, developing training guidelines is not one document, but in fact a suite of documents, including things such as a list of providers, guidance on selecting a trainer, as well as the things that we thought we would be looking at, which is, elements such as the core content and a set of best practices for, delivery of training and assessment.

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So, that's made life a little more complicated. But we are proceeding with developing guidelines, but it looks like it's going to be a suite of documents rather than a single, document. But I'm interested, given that in the direction that we're going in, how you say the priority of, of training guidelines.

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And what? We have a high participation rate, so I'm not sure the results for either.

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Okay. So highly reasonable. Okay, so we're on track, then. Based on that feedback in, in, developing some guidelines, that would be of, of use. Okay. The initiative I'm particularly excited about is, our resource bank, and that's this sort of middle level of that, layered information. Ecosystem that I talked about.

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We're looking to develop a, an online collection of plain language resources. One of the problems that we have is that the resources out there, but they're all quite, spread across different organizations and different platforms. So we're looking at developing a resource bank, to bring together in a single platform a, a collection of resources that, would be available to all members of our organizations.

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It would be a wiki based platform, structured, cross reference, searchable and multilingual. And, this is where, I will attempt to do some sharing. Where are we now? Is everyone able to see, that browser come up there? Yes, exactly. Okay. Thank you. I'm going to do a quick demo, of what we've done now, I should say this is very early days of, the resource bank.

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So, we're still building the resources. We're still testing out the platform, but, the concept is that, resources, put onto a link to, to this platform. And they can then be tagged and they can be tagged by a number of topics so that people can search via topic. So you might want to, for example, do a search on expression, plain language expression.

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And you can quickly find a in that case an article about about readability. Or you might want to do a search on services, the kind of, services that you deliver. You might be interested. What are the kind of style guides are out there? And there comes up there's, a, French language version of, a European Union, style guide.

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You might want to search by, sector, for example. And so if we have a look at the nonprofit sector, for example, there's a contractor agreement in plain language that, and you can see at the top here all of the topics that particular resource, has been tagged in. So the resources and it's a relational database.

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So depending on the tag, you can find, and this particular resource would come up under any topic you might want to, You might want to do a search on cultural change. And then it has a very quick and powerful search function that shows you, what the what, what the resources are that are available around, for example, plain language strategy or cultural change and, some will be available, depending on the permission of the content owner to download.

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Some will be, published within the platform, some will be available to open up as a, as a, as a new tab link to the link to the website of the, the resource owner. So that's, just a sneak preview. As I say, it's likely to be a wiki model, so it's likely to be user run and generated.

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We may have users at different levels of access. And the business model for it at the moment is we're looking to make it available to all the members of all federation organizations. It will probably be, volunteer run. We at the moment are getting access to that platform as, nonprofit at no charge, which is fantastic.

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But, as it evolves over time, of course, it's, the possibility it may involve a charge. So I'm interested. A couple of questions. And again, a quick poll. Sorry, it's a quick look, but we have a lot to cover. But does that resource bank looks like something of interest to you? And if so, would you be prepared to pay a little bit extra, say 5 or $10 in your membership fees to help cover some of the costs of that?

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If we can, and we're getting a resounding, a resounding yes on the, the resource bank being a useful thing. Coming in at about 98% and a similar sort of, 90 plus percent, that we would be interested in, contributing from membership fees. Okay. Thank you for that. All right. Just quickly, because time is running on, I want to talk about that third level of our, membership ecosystem.

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What we're doing through the federation's, website, and how we're advocating for plain language more generally, in, different countries, the federation has been, its main source for communicating, on its, I'm behalf, about its activities is our website. We have a growing number of, resources on the, the website we've set up and resources, a resources page, and see if this will work.

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Okay. So I can tab to just do a quick demo of some of this. So on the resources page we have some case studies that demonstrate, their examples of how the ISO study works in practice. To give you an example here, for example, is a a guideline on, clear communication for better health. Now, this was initially discussed potentially as another part to the ISO standard.

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But the people working on that decided they wanted to make this one much more freely available rather than being locked behind a paywall. So we've made this one freely available on the Federation's, website. So for those who are in the health sector here is effectively a standard or a guideline about communication in the in the health sector.

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The area that we've done, I suppose the most advanced communication around is around the standard itself. So those of you, for example, who are interested in how do I go about getting the standard adopted in my own country, they've developed a guide, which takes you through the process of navigating, ISO and the national standards bodies as to how to do that.

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And they're also, frequently asked questions. If we view all of those, you can, you can refer and it's a useful, very useful resource for those of you who, are explaining the standard and how it works and what's involved and who it's for, to clients and others. So do please visit the federation's website regularly.

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And have a look at our resources section. We have a bibliography with regular updates and, pages on that. On the standard. So having done the live demo of that, apart from the website, mainly the way that we advocate and communicate is through our member organizations or a federation of member organizations.

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We, participating through their conferences, webinars such as today, through their publications such as the Clarity Journal, The Plain a journal. So, rather than compete with the member organizations in, what they doing in that area apart from the, the website, the federation, then advocates for plain language through supporting the activities of its member organizations.

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We are, however, looking to as the federation's activities grow, better manage the way we communicate through our website. We've recently formed a communications committee with some expertise to be able to work on this. And, it's going to, work in five areas, including a strategy to have a look at, future communications. Some of you have some questions about how the federation, can better advocate for plain language in new countries and new languages.

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At the moment, that's something we'll do through the member organizations. But I am interested. And this is our, eighth poll question. Your thoughts about, the advocacy that we're doing. Should we be doing more, and more directly, or, is what we're doing, about the right ballpark? Okay, not surprisingly, just give it a few.

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A few more participants and.

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Okay, so we're mostly about, if we share the results 71%, think we should be doing, doing more. Okay, so that's that's useful to feed into the, the process now wasn't originally going to be talking too much about the federation as an organization, because outcomes are more interesting than process. But a number of you had questions around where the federation fits in as an organization.

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So just want to take a couple of minutes to reinforce, what the federation is and what it is not. Federation is essentially a, a group that brings together three member organizations, plain Clarity and the the center for Plain Language as a kind of a working group. And as far as its mission goes, the idea was that it should focus on initiatives that are best achieved by the organizations working together.

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It makes sense, and it makes sense that we don't all develop our own definition of sign language. It makes sense that we don't each have a resource bank, that we do one of those things. So that's the main difference between the member organizations and the federation. The federation is a working group that brings the member organizations together for activities that help to professionalize plain language that are best done through joint action.

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We've been working to a strategy that, as you can see, pretty much aligns with the activities that we're still working on, working on today. You know, definition has been achieved or achieving the standard training is an ongoing thing. The resource bank will help us advance research communications that way. Attempting to strengthen preliminary work on certification.

00:42:23:16 - 00:42:52:19

And of course, working on what the federation is, we're governed by a board which has three, two members each from the three member organizations, and they in turn appoint six members to represent a wide range of countries and languages, who, and they're also joined by the chair and the immediate past chair. Increasingly, however, the work of the federation is done through its committees.

00:42:52:21 - 00:43:26:07

These are made up, and I'd love to always give a shout out to our 75 marvelous volunteers who do so much work through our committees. All of the activity that I've been talking about really comes down to the volunteers through our committees reporting to, to the board. And we are at this point, wanting to the options paper that had established our kind of framework, if you like, is now 15 years ago, the plain language world has evolved.

00:43:26:09 - 00:43:53:14

The ISO standard is changing our environment. We are looking to have another look at our governance. We are we are looking at, even the Federation model. Is that the best model to be continuing with, to bring together those organizations, or should we be doing something else? Is that mission of professionalism, plain action through, through joint action?

00:43:53:16 - 00:44:24:24

The best one for us to maintain. So I'm interested if, people do have a view on this and then we'll wrap up and, and, go to questions, but, do you think we should continue in our current, form? Should we just an update? Mission and vision, tweak that to some extent.

00:44:25:01 - 00:44:35:07

Just that I'm at a high level.

00:44:35:09 - 00:44:45:16

Right.

00:44:45:18 - 00:45:13:18

So we might share the results of that. Okay, so we have pretty broad support for continuing the federation, but we do need to look at our current, our current sort of mission and vision and the way that works. So that, for me, reinforces the, the need for us to proceed with this governance review and have a look at the why where, we're running.

00:45:13:20 - 00:45:38:20

Okay. So that brings me to the, the end of my presentation. I hope that's answered the maximum number of questions. We did have about seven pages of questions. So, but we do have a bit of time and I'm going to hand back to, to Nadia in this case to, moderate some final discussion. Nadia, thank you so much.

00:45:38:20 - 00:46:05:13

New, I'll have four questions already lined up for you. If there are any other questions, please post them in the chat. The first question is from Kathy about the resources that, will it also have research in it and who gets to choose who can upload the content? Okay, two very good questions. The answer is yes.

00:46:05:15 - 00:46:29:05

We're also looking to have research in it. The examples I showed briefly, I guess, were more demonstrating some of the, article and of, resources. But yes, it could be open to any kind of, resource. And the same question, who will be able to upload. That's part of the editorial model that we need to finalize.

00:46:29:07 - 00:47:08:15

At the one level, we can be completely wiki based and make it open to anyone to post. And that's something we might do. At the other level, we might have a very centralized editorial model, where people need to submit and, you know, have things approved. We're probably going to be at the wiki end of the halfway mark would probably have, much more of a wiki based, but it may be that, rather than everyone who accesses it being able to post it may be that, there is a user access that can, that can post, but then I can freely post.

00:47:08:15 - 00:47:31:24

And it may be as simple as, okay, to be able to post something, you need to show that you understand the guidelines about posting and so on and so forth. So we want to make it as much community driven as possible. Also to minimize funding, that would be required. But with some quality control.

00:47:32:01 - 00:48:00:16

Perfect. Thank you. New. The next question is from Greg. With the appeal, if take over the international conference sequence. No, not not not at this stage. We are a working group of, member organizations. So we're not set up at the moment to be competing with the member organizations. We're there to do things that are best achieved with the member bringing the

member organizations together.

00:48:00:16 - 00:48:25:15

So at the moment at least, the model is not that we would stop doing things that the member organizations are already doing, but rather support the member organizations. And that includes things like conferences and publications and events. Greg's, next question is from G. What is the status of the See Clear Training initiative? Sorry, I just missed the first part of that.

00:48:25:17 - 00:48:56:20

What is the status of the I see Clear training initiative? And and unfortunately, the status is deceased. And, it was a fabulous, fabulous initiative, that, secured some funding from the Erasmus Foundation in Europe to develop a certificate level, training program for plain language. It ran a pilot program, and, it was very successful, but I just couldn't get an institutional backer, and ongoing funding.

00:48:56:20 - 00:49:24:24

It came very close. So as a result, it, and unfortunately wound down. It was, one of our most exciting kind of initiatives that, a lot of us put a lot of hard work into. But unfortunately, it didn't continue. Thank you. Next question is from Colleen. With the certification, how does an organization made up of so many people of various skills levels?

00:49:25:01 - 00:49:59:07

It's certified. Is it just as for specific things like the website? Yeah. Now that brings us back to the producer or product. Issue is certification. So for an organization, the first area that we look like being able to achieve is certification for the organization's management process for developing content so that, making sure that they apply the right principles and processes for writing documents.

00:49:59:09 - 00:50:31:06

And that they have the right management systems when it comes to policy, strategy, reporting, measurement and so on. That's likely to be the first area that an organization can get certification for that way, in plain language. And and that's likely to be easier than, certifying people for, through the ISO system, at least for an individual type of document, whether it's a website or whether it's, a report or so on.

00:50:31:08 - 00:51:01:07

However, with organizations, and then hopefully after that, individuals who are certified, it's more

likely than then they're the ones who will be doing certification of those individual products, websites, documents and so on. But to do that against an ISIS standard, we need to strengthen the current guidance standards into what's called a requirement standard. You can see why certification does my heading.

00:51:01:09 - 00:51:25:19

It is such a complicated thing working with ISO. So certification of an individual thing like a, like a it's out there, people are doing it now and can continue to do it. It just at the moment they can't do that against ISO and can't say that there's something certified against ISO. It doesn't stop, stop them, stop them doing it.

00:51:25:21 - 00:51:50:23

But the more we develop the framework to, develop the standards, certify, organizations and individuals, the better the quality of what that work is. Going to be. And hopefully we can also get to the point where people can certify against an ISO standard for something like a website or a document. Thank you so much for that, Neil.

00:51:50:23 - 00:52:15:21

Yes, it is very confusing and that is why I will do a deep dive into certification. Early next year. So watch out for that. There is a comment from Antonia. It says, a concern, a problem with plain language training because to what extent can I talk about ISO without giving the standard the precise text of ISO?

00:52:15:21 - 00:52:40:10

So it's that whole copyright issue. Yeah. And it is a tricky one. And it is, you know, it is a double edged sword. On the one hand it's fantastic having the authority of ISO and benefiting from that. On the other hand, behind a paywall and it's copyrighted. So ISO does have a a guideline about the use of standards.

00:52:40:12 - 00:53:08:15

And it's on IP. And what we can do perhaps is add that to the, the links, and that we publish on the website with this, recording, and circulate that, as a general rule of thumb, what the convener of weight group 11, commented on recently in a meeting is that you should apply the normal kind of principles that you apply in your countries around copyright material.

00:53:08:17 - 00:53:38:13

In other words, there are fair dealing, principles in copyright as to, what you can and can't. Can't

cite, obviously citing a whole standard, you know, 100% of text that's citing parts of it, under fair dealings is is much more feasible. Giving more detail on that will, will require looking at exactly what the context is and the use of it.

00:53:38:13 - 00:54:00:13

But, what we can do is add to the, the links that are in the, in the chat. The, the ISO URL and unless somebody very clever can find it quickly and put it in the chat before we finish up. Today, because that is an I said publication that gives specific guidance around this.

00:54:00:15 - 00:54:30:08

Perfect. Thank you. And then, last questions. Two questions from Thomas. First one, what is the procedure to localize the ISO for language languages other than English? That's the first question. I think you can answer that one. And then we will end with the okay. Legalization of the standard in particular. You do have to work through the ISO system because it's an ISO standard.

00:54:30:14 - 00:54:58:14

So that means working through the local national standards body. So my first tip is find out who your national standards body is and makes them your next best friend. A lot of, a lot of, countries have, what's called a mirror committee. I'm, convener with, Tunisia, Theobald in Australia of the as as the Standards Australia mirror Committee.

00:54:58:16 - 00:55:33:07

The working group there. And, you know, we're open to people joining and, and we then are able to give feedback to, the standards as they're developed. And so connecting in with your national standards body and if they have a mirror committee and working through, that mechanism, that's the number one tip about, localizing because that's where the work will need to be done, persuading them to adopt the standard, persuading them to, to translate the standard in your language.

00:55:33:12 - 00:55:53:03

That's, that's, that's my number one tip. Thank you. Neal. And then the last question, what do you think about readability and usability tools? Am I am I that's the standard or the federation recommend any specific tools?

00:55:53:05 - 00:56:19:20

Yeah. We don't tend to get into that business of, of recommending specific tools. I'd probably

better steer away for, any, any particular endorsements or recommendations of, specific tools. Of course, generally speaking, readability and AI tools come with, a lot of cautions. There's a lot of research around the limits of readability tools.

00:56:19:20 - 00:56:55:18

So, be cautious about and particularly ones that do online calculations. So be very cautious about using any of those. I, I know some people, ask questions about AI. We know that AI does do some things reasonably okay when it comes to plain language, and it does other things atrociously. So, it's not too bad at some of the expression elements of, plain language documents that it's pretty hopeless on structure and, and, and design.

00:56:55:20 - 00:57:17:21

And it's also not terribly reliable when it comes to content. But you know, apart from that, I and, you know, and that's an example of an area where the world is changing. AI hasn't been part of our, part of our, agenda as the federation and our organizations. Maybe that's something we need to take on.

00:57:17:21 - 00:57:23:19

Maybe that's something we need to be a bit more active and involved in.

00:57:23:21 - 00:57:49:03

All right. Thank you so much, Neil, for guiding us through all this, and putting your work and all your effort in it. We'd love to hear what you think about this webinar. So Nigel will, now post the link to an evaluation form in the chat. If you can please fill in now, of course, you'll also receive, an email, with a recording of this webinar.

00:57:49:05 - 00:58:18:10

And I hope you have a nice rest of the day. The nice rest of the evening. And stay tuned for more information on our upcoming webinars. Thank you. And thank you to Nadia and Farida for doing such a marvelous job of, the logistics of organizing this webinar. It was a very smooth process, and it was a pleasure to be working with you.

00:58:18:12 - 00:58:31:12

Thank you everyone. Thanks, everyone. Bye bye.