

# Mautic Governance Working Group - Working Doc

This document is a working doc which includes some of the topics that we are discussing in the Slack channel (#wg-governance on Slack, get an invite at <https://mau.tc/slack-invite>).

It should be understood that these are notes and thoughts, not final decisions, which are written down so we can refer back to them in the future more easily!

## Notes

### First draft from Ruth

Here is a rough explanation of my thinking on how we might go with the new governance model:

☰ Proposed governance changes for Mautic - April 2023

Here is a tracked change doc which is a direct copy of the governance model with the specific changes that I have suggested:

☰ Mautic project governance - proposed update

## Discussion areas

### Organizational structure

Currently we have a somewhat hierarchical structure, with the Community Council.

### Summary

#### Do we need an hierarchical structure?

There are alternatives we could consider like horizontal (flat) organisational structures.

Note: I'm trying to find examples of successful open source projects with horizontal org structures and am not turning up anything. If anyone comes across any, please add them.

Some of the responsibilities that the Community Council holds currently:

- Operational oversight (e.g. infrastructure, legal)
- Decision making body which acts as the escalation point for Code of Conduct incidents and any decisions that impact the whole project, reflect a significant change, or which can't be resolved fully within teams
- Budget, finances and strategy (in full consultation with team leads)
- Planning for larger scale events (e.g. MautiCon)
- Managing employees and contractors
- Decision making body for legal decisions (trademark) and fiscal decisions (fiscal host)

Ruth: I don't think that there is a problem with the way the Community Council currently functions in terms of the hierarchy, as decisions are always made in full consultation with team leads. Removing Acquia and implementing a voting process would make it much more democratic, plus it would potentially open up who we have serving on the council and thereby broaden the skillset and have less falling on the shoulders of the few (with reference to the team leads currently doubling up as being on the council).

I firmly believe that we need to have a decision making body who can hold the responsibility for these project-wide decisions and not just expect it to somehow happen within teams. I think going forward that the Community Council should have a much clearer defined purpose and remit, and that we should elect people based on their skills and experience in delivering in the areas we need to focus.

Having a formal decision making body is important both for our own internal governance, but also because external organizations who rely on Mautic expect to see that there is a group of people who are tasked with steering the organization.

## Voting

### Summary

- We want the community to have a say in who represents them in leadership roles within the project
- We want to encourage positive behavior within the community, so voting rights are one way that we can incentivize people towards the behaviors we want to see.
- It's a powerful signal to send to the community, that you have a say in how Mautic is run if you are actively involved
- **Financial contributions** could be an option to give people voting rights, providing that we set the entry point at a level that is reasonable worldwide (either by having a low entry point (eg \$5), or by using the [Big Mac Index](#) to adjust according to location).
- **Practical contributions** could be an option - either having contributed (at all) over a defined period of time, or having more contributions in that time giving more voting 'power'
- **Tenure** could be an option - for example after you have been in the community for a specified period of time you have the right to vote.
- **A combination** of the mentioned options could also be considered - eg been a member of the community for xxx months and made xxx contributions
- There is a balance to be struck between keeping the entry bar low and hence open to as many as possible but possibly being open to manipulation and 'gaming the system', and having a higher bar where you have to really care (by contributing a lot, practically or financially) which can be exclusionary to those who are not able to contribute at that level

- The simplest way is that each person who is eligible to vote on something has one vote (cooperative model), but there could be an option that the more you give, the more votes you get. This would be much more complicated to implement.

## Notes from Slack threads

### Do we need a voting system?

In the [current governance model](#), the Council and Team Leads are selected by the Project Lead, but to enable community involvement, Ruth proposed a motion to have those roles instead elected by the community.

### How do we decide who gets to vote?

- Sven: Whatever system needs to create incentives for [doing the behaviours we want to see] and protects against the behaviours that [we don't want to see].

If we think about it in terms of systems thinking, what we want to achieve are to grow contributions tenfold over the coming 3-5 years and to achieve financial stability in the project so that we stay a living community.

So we should think about what structures we need to have in place that will incentivise these behaviours on an emotional and intellectual level.

- Yosu: It is a powerful good signal to send out into the world, that in this community, everyone has a vote.

Suggestions for how to determine who can vote include:

### Financial contributors

- Ruth: Several open source projects require there to be some minimum financial contribution - for example [TYPO3](#), [Drupal](#), [Decidim](#).
- Ruth: Could we keep it at a low rate that is achievable in most places of the world, for example starting from \$5?
  - Sven: This could be open to abuse if it is so low - eg a company could pay 'sock puppets' to contribute by giving them \$5, and therefore they would be eligible to vote
  - Ruth: Here be dragons .... Drupal sees a lot of issues with people trying (and succeeding) to game the system by companies getting their staff to make lots of small, often pointless contributions that make a lot more work for the maintainers, just to get one more 'point' - because they rank things like their directory by the credits accrued by the company.

So we would have to perhaps tighten up our CoC / etiquette to make sure that this kind of behaviour isn't going to proliferate. But for now I would settle for more

people actually contributing, I think that having people making too many small ones might be a good problem to have?!

- Yosu: Could we factor in something like the Big Mac Factor which we already use, to make it proportionately fair around the world for the financial entry point? (see [Partners Program](#) and spreadsheet with factors [here](#), repo with raw data [here](#) for how we currently use this to set the minimum contribution point to be a partner)
- Norman: Using money as a factor gives power to the rich people, contributions might be a better way to go, empowering instead the people who keep the project alive to vote.
- Yosu: What if we made it really expensive? Like an 'earn your citizenship' status which grants permission to vote (as a way to mitigate against gaming the system if it were really low entry point) - so that you either have to do a lot of contributing or a lot of financial support to get the right to vote? Effectively this would mean most folks would probably turn towards contributing.
  - Ruth: Might put people off from having a say / reduce the pool of eligible voters too much?

#### Practical contributors

- Sven: If people in the community are active contributors, but not financial ones, would they then not be allowed to vote?
- Yosu: How long does it enable someone to have voting rights after they made their last contribution? Or does it last forever?

#### Both financial and practical contributions

- Sven: In my non-digital life, I am on the board of a cooperative that is building a social and sustainable food market. The principle here is that members must work in the cooperative, i.e. in the market and/or the organization around it, in order to receive the financial benefits (discounted prices for food). In this way we gain members who at the same time participate in the building of the cooperative.

But we also have a process in which the Board of Directors and the Supervisory Board can jointly decide, at the member's request, to make other participations (or to waive the work requirement for certain periods of time) for individual members if they are currently suffering from particular hardships.

Therefore, I just thought, because it would also help the community around Mautic very much, if someone contributes regularly, whether you can not do both: A minimum contribution of 5 USD per month or an active contribution continuously in the past three months, or an active contribution in 9 of the past 12 months. Depending on how you would want to draw the lines.

- Ruth: We could take a hybrid approach like we do with the partners program. You have to be financially contributing at a defined minimum level, and you also have to be practically contributing as well within a defined time period.

How many votes would each person have?

- Yosu: Maybe we could tie the number of available votes to the amount that the person contributes? Could we maybe use the data from Savannah to determine this over time? Eg last [90 days chart](#) - effectively creating a [meritocracy](#).
- Sven: Do we have to do it that way?

I have already reported elsewhere that I am on the supervisory board of a cooperative. The principle of a cooperative is that everyone has exactly **one** vote. It doesn't matter how many shares someone has bought in the cooperative. That's what distinguishes a cooperative from a stock corporation.

At the same time, however, simply because of the resulting meritocracy, there are naturally people in the cooperative whose opinions, views and statements carry more weight because they have demonstrated to others how they contribute, that they can be relied on and that they support the cooperative as important pillars with their work.

Therefore, their opinion only counts for important decisions, but since their views become public in discussions in the cooperative, other members gather behind these members and thus the meritocracy ensures that the influence is also correspondingly greater. Despite purely grassroots democratic basic structures.

- Joey: I would limit the number of votes to 2-3 max, and make it **not depend** on activity. If you ask 100 irrelevant questions and give 100 useless answers in the Forums, you will be a very active member with many votes.

Notes from other open source projects

Python

Lots of useful information in this governance review: <https://peps.python.org/pep-8002/>

<https://fossgovernance.org/> - I used this extensively when we were getting things up and running for Mautic.

<https://governingopen.com/> - new website

<https://communityrule.info/> - looks interesting!

## Python Software Foundation

- The Python Software Foundation: [PSF membership](#) has an entry level tier called Basic Member (non voting) and other tiers called Supporting Member, Managing Member, Contributing Members and Fellows (voting rights)
  - [Supporting members](#) - financially support the project, at least \$99/yr
    - They have a '[sliding scale](#)' option if the \$99/yr is not affordable.
  - [Managing or Contributing members](#) are folks who have voting rights by the fact that they are actively contributing to the project. It's self certified from what I can see.

*You qualify as a Managing Member if you dedicate at least five hours per month working to support the Python Software Foundation or the Python community--organizing Python events, working on PSF projects, participating in one of the PSF's working groups, etc.*

*You qualify as a Contributing Member if you dedicate at least five hours per month working on projects which advance the mission of the PSF by creating or maintaining open source software available to the public at no charge.*

- [Fellows](#) are members who have been nominated for their extraordinary efforts and impact upon Python, the community, and the broader Python ecosystem.

## Python Steering Council

- [Python Steering Council](#): maintainers of Python core only. Very small group (5 maintainers) who are elected after each major release of Python.
- Through the fall of 2018, [several models](#) were proposed, including [electing a new BDFL](#) (renamed the Gracious Umpire Influencing Decisions Officer: the GUIDO), or moving to a [community model](#) based on consensus and voting, without centralized leadership. In December 2018, the [steering council](#) model was chosen after a vote among the core developers.
- Read about the model [here](#) and the process of deciding on this model [here](#).

## EN Wikipedia [Arbitration Committee](#)

- English Wikipedia elections for, say, Arbitration Committee have certain requirements (read details [here](#))
  - has a registered account and has made at least 500 mainspace edits on English Wikipedia before 1 November
  - is in good standing and not subject to active blocks or site-bans
  - meets the Wikimedia Foundation's criteria for access to non-public data, is willing to sign the Foundation's non-public information confidentiality agreement
  - has disclosed any previous or alternate accounts in their election statements (legitimate accounts which have been declared to the Arbitration Committee before the close of nominations do not need to be publicly disclosed)

- They have a well established voting process using support, neutral or oppose with neutral being an abstention - *“In 2023, the top 8 candidates on that list will receive two-year terms, provided that they received at least 60% of the non-neutral vote, and one-year terms if they got at least 50% but less than 60%. Seats will remain vacant if there is an insufficient number of candidates with at least as many supports as opposes (to date, this has not occurred in any previous election)”*

## Joomla

Restructured the governance process in 2017 for appointing to the board

- Has two groups of roles so that they stagger renewals
- Roles are defined as team members, team leaders, department coordinators and officers (see byelaws [here](#))
- Team members and team leaders who are part of official and fully formed teams can vote for the department coordinator to which their team belongs
- Team members, team leads and department coordinators can vote on officer positions (President, VP, Secretary, Treasurer)

## Decision making processes

### Notes from Slack threads

- Yosu: Are we considering [Direct Democracy](#)?
  - Sven: My experience with direct democracy initiatives is, that the too often grind to a halt because of trivial matters.

I really like it for bigger/big-ish decisions, though, so that a full plenum will be called (like currently, to debate and decide on general directional things), but that the project groups and their group leads can decide on more operational/trivial matters.

- Ruth: My concern with having everything decided by the masses is that nothing will actually get decided. I wonder if there might be some middle ground maybe - for example certain kinds of decision are made by public voting but others are done by a team / council structure or whatever.
- Sven: We also have to bear in mind decision fatigue [if we are expecting the community to vote on too many things which they maybe don't care about]
- I'm afraid of direct democracy, better keep decisions for a group of under 10 representatives.
- Yosu: Maybe we limit the topics that can be proposed
- Ruth's thoughts: I think we have to expect that there will be minimal engagement to start with and therefore I think direct democracy would be detrimental because we just would not have enough critical mass for any meaningful decision making. I feel that we make much faster progress in a much more meaningful direction

when there are representatives of the community who are tasked with making those decisions.

I like the sound of

*"Semi-direct democracies, in which representatives administer day-to-day governance, but the citizens remain the sovereign" ~ Source:*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct\\_democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy)

I do think this would be a better balance. For example we have elections for the leadership roles, team leads are empowered with decision making within their teams, but the community is still 'in power' because of the options for referendum.

We should **not** be tempted to take every single thing to vote and expect the masses to decide all the things. Firstly we don't have masses of engaged people, and secondly, most things don't actually need to go to the vote. I think we should restrict voting initially just to elections for leadership - and in those cases the doors are thrown open to come and vote for anyone who is eligible (see earlier section).

- Yosu also suggested the following
  - Consensus Decision Making: Important decisions are made by agreement instead of voting.  
<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/seeds-for-change-consensus-decision-making>
  - Rank choice voting  
<https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting/#rcvbenefits> - Rank choice is in between Consensus and democracy, probably a good tool to consider when Unity is not feasible, because it is as fast as democracy but allows for outcomes that are more acceptable for more people.
  - Whoever shows up: Instead of having certain people in specific groups, whoever shows up participates in the decision making. "Whoever shows up" Could be a great tool for urgent decisions that affect the short term or that need a fast response and can be re-considered and re-voted again after the crisis is resolved. It could also be a way to speed up any process in the early stages (now) when not a lot of people really feels the need to be involved.
  - Anarchist Law-making. Anarchist style law making, could be the driver for the different silos, teams, tigers, Workgroups, etc... Since it contains no rules, everything is up to the specific group, which maximizes flexibility and hence, hopefully, maximizes creativity and quality of outcomes as a result.
- Yosu: Consensus is a fantastic tool to ensure:
  - Everyone is heard and no one is left behind (for the most part).
  - "Unity" is always well regarded, so good public image.



- Longer lasting and increased sense of belonging and overall happiness with the status quo.
- And it does not need to be used for everything, just the main decisions. Unity or consensus is usually hard and takes a lot of time...

## Decision making

Currently, decision making in the community council works on consensus. The Project Lead has a casting vote in certain situations where consensus cannot be reached for whatever reason:

*We believe that the community functions best when it can reach broad consensus about a way forward. However, it is not uncommon in the Open Source world for there to be multiple good arguments, no clear consensus, and for open questions to divide communities rather than enrich them. The debate absorbs the energy that might otherwise have gone towards the creation of a solution.*

*In many cases, there is no one 'right' answer, and what is needed is a decision more than a debate. The Project Lead acts to provide clear leadership on difficult issues, and set the pace for the project.*

*Some examples of how this casting vote might be called into effect could include:*

- *Decisions without a consensus – any time there is an equal split on a decision, the Project Lead may use their casting vote to decide the vote*
- *Technical decisions – for example frameworks to adopt or key strategic objectives – where there is no clear consensus from the community, or the suggestions being made could be detrimental to the long term vision for the project, the Project Lead can determine the path to be taken*
- *Feature prioritisation – if a particular feature needs to be prioritised the Project Lead can instruct Acquia employees to work on developing that feature*

Source:

<https://contribute.mautic.org/community-structure/governance#the-mautic-community-council>

This approach has worked well so far within the community council, and also within teams.

## Summary

- There were discussions on various different models for decision making, including [Direct Democracy](#), [Consensus decision making](#), [Instant runoff voting](#), whoever shows up voting, Anarchist law making.
- Discussions on avoiding decision fatigue - only asking people to vote on things which are really important to get the input of the wider community, and making it really clear why that input is sought and needed
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## Notes from Slack threads

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