

GOSH Governance Working Group - Summary of Progress

Overview

What follows is a summary of progress and recommendations made to date by the Governance Working Group.

This draft is provided in advance of the GOSH community call scheduled for 16 December 2020, where all aspects of this document will be up for discussion and feedback.

The Governance Working Group understands our primary responsibility to be putting in place the structure and processes necessary to formally seat a longer-term governing body.

The Governance Working Group thus considers our remit to be "minimum viable governance structure". We are maintaining a list of the issues and decisions we plan to pass forward to the seated body to consider and to codify, including formalization of Code of Conduct oversight processes and instantiation of other community governance constructs, all in collaboration and consultation with the GOSH community.

This document is divided into five parts:

- The vision we are positing for GOSH community governance
- Decisions and recommendations made to this point
- A summary of the proposed election process
- Decisions the Working Group has elected to defer and pass forward to the elected governing body
- Open questions and unresolved issues

All of this is subject to community feedback and discussion. We consider all that follows to be a work in progress, and welcome input, questions and suggestions for other models and communities from which to learn and draw.

The vision we are following for GOSH community governance

The Governance Working Group envisions a diverse and vibrant governing body that richly and responsibly represents the needs and interests of the GOSH community while overseeing maturation and formalization of GOSH community governance processes and needs.

In terms of composition of the governing body, we consider it critical that there be:

- An overall balance on gender, race, and background;
- Good regional representation with a goal of global coverage;
- An ability for the global GOSH community to see themselves reflected in the makeup of the governing body.

It is also desired that there be a balance of disciplines, including individuals who are unaffiliated, from community-based organizations or NGOs, and in general from different backgrounds.

In terms of the remit of the governing body, there should be commitment among the elected members to:

- Follow GOSH's goals, values and roadmap and to implement governance;
- Demonstrate commitment to participating and contributing in GOSH community;
- Work transparently and accountably in collaboration with the community to further define and enrich GOSH community governance practices and norms.

In terms of governance structure, we envision a body with these attributes:

- An odd number of members, in order to avoid voting deadlocks;
- A reasonable group size that strikes a balance between inclusion and manageable logistics;
- Reasonable terms and term limits, in a framework that staggers elected terms so that continuity and institutional knowledge are preserved across annual elections;
- Designed to facilitate pathways to increasing youth participation in governance and leadership over time.

In terms of what we *don't* want to see in the governing body:

- Representatives from one region dominating the group;
- Representatives who are not committed to fully delivering on the responsibilities of the role;
- People who are unfamiliar with the norms and values of the GOSH community.
- Representation by anyone who has violated the GOSH code of conduct or demonstrated harassing behavior inside or outside the GOSH community in a manner would compromise their ability to be trusted in a governing role;

Decisions and recommendations made to date

Name of governing body

After discussion about what would be appropriate language within GOSH's community norms, we are recommending the formal name of the GOSH governing body be "**Community Council**".

We consider this terminology preferable to terms like "board" which convey hierarchy and greater exclusivity.

Those elected to the Community Council will be referred to as Community Council Members.

Scope of Community Council

The GOSH governing body we are planning to seat will oversee or delegate all subsequent tasks, questions and issues related to governance of the GOSH community.

This scope will include building out more complete governance structures, as the current Governance Working Group is focused on resolving the minimum viable set of governance processes and design decisions required to seat the first Community Council.

Further specifics can be found in the section "Deferred decisions to be passed forward to the future Community Council".

Number of Community Council members

The proposed size of the first Community Council is 7 members.

After discussion and reflection, we believe this number is large enough to enable a broad and diverse set of community representatives, while also being manageable in terms of logistics and collaboration dynamics.

Seating of Community Council members

Community Council members will be elected through an annual community voting process, for which a draft process is described later in this summary.

The Working Group feels strong that the seating of Community Council Members should consider the equity and diverse principles of our community.

As a point of reference, the demographic goals of GOSH 2017 and 2018:

- Women, Trans, and/or non-conforming: 52% of attendees
- People of color, Indigenous people, and people from the Majority World: 52% of attendees

- Unaffiliated, community-based organization/NGO: 33% of attendees

GOSH 2017 and 2018 also had the goal of 33% attendees being people from Latin America or Asia respectively *because this was where GOSH was hosted*, this is not relevant to seating the Community Council.

The proposed election process has been developed to center and prioritize corresponding goals.

Eligibility for nominations and for voting

We are recommending that eligibility for both Community Council candidates and for eligibility for voting in Community Council elections shall require 6 months of active participation in the GOSH community.

By “Active participation” we envision anyone who has made a substantial or significant contribution to the GOSH community. Though we leave "substantial/significant" up to individual interpretation, examples might include: facilitating sessions at a GOSH gathering, contributing to GOSH roadmap editing, organizing community calls, providing insight or helping others via the forum, organizing regional or topical GOSH-related gatherings.

We want to vet this time frame and criteria with the community, and will then move to more formally define “active participation”.

Community Council Term lengths

It is proposed that Community Council membership will persist for 2-year terms, with several 1-year terms seated in the first election to enable staggering of terms year over year.

For the first election, and only for the first election, candidates will run for a mix of 2-year and 1-year to start in order to establish staggered terms. This will enable balanced annual turnover moving forward, with e.g. 3 or 4 new members being elected each year.

After the first election, all open seats will be for 2-year terms in subsequent elections.

Timeline for first Community Council election

The working group has drafted a potential timeline moving forward:

- 16 December - Community Call for feedback on process
- 31 January - Finalize election process, technology, managing and communicating results
- 15 February - Open nominations
- 6 March - Close nominations, open consideration of candidates
- 27 March - Voting starts
- 3 April - Voting closes, Community Council announced

This timeline will be revisited and updated as each milestone is reached, in order to make sure the first election is executed in an inclusive, effective and successful fashion.

Proposed election process

Nomination of candidates

Individuals can nominate others or self-nominate for inclusion in the candidate pool. Individuals nominated by others will need to explicitly accept their nomination in order to be included in the election.

Nominated candidates can indicate whether they self-identify as being part of a "social minority". This language is being used to hopefully mitigate the need to enumerate, taxonomize or otherwise debate non-majority identities. Possible source for definition:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minority_group

Our goal in employing the social minority designation is to maximize the agency of candidates to assert their status, while also avoiding any exhaustive enumeration of identities or traits, which would seem likely engender disagreement and debate, and certainly complicate the initial election process.

In this first iteration, the current governance working group will ensure social minority self-identifications are credible and consistent with inclusion and equity objectives.

Once the first Community Council is seated, the Community Council will serve in the candidate vetting role in subsequent elections, though there are potential conflict of interest elements to address and mitigate in such a model.

Time frames for nominations and candidacy

The proposed window of time for nominations is 3 weeks, within which any eligible community member can nominate themselves or others.

The proposed window of time for campaigning and consideration of candidates is also 3 weeks. During this time, candidates can post statements, community calls can be scheduled to let candidates compare and contrast their priorities and views, and community members can pose questions and thoughts.

Voting process

Vote casting

The voting process will allow each community member to vote for up to 7 candidates in the first election. In subsequent elections, voting members would cast a number of votes equal to the number of open seats.

The working assumption is that voting would be anonymous, though logistical details would need to be resolved to ensure no one is able to vote more than once.

Recommendations and decisions on voting process details, including technology and administration, are being deferred until after the community call taking place on 16 December.

Vote tabulation

When votes are tallied, a minimum of 4 candidates who self-identify as social minorities would be seated, presuming there were 4 such candidates in the pool.

The implication of this is that other than the top 3 vote-getters could be at risk of being bypassed for a seat in favor of a non-majority candidate who received less votes.

Administration of the election

The Governance Working Group will administer the first election, and will designate one individual to serve in a formal secretary role for the purpose of curating and reporting on election results.

Administration of future elections will be further defined by the Community Council once they are seated.

Deferred decisions to be passed forward to the future Community Council

In concert with delivering on a “minimum viable governance” remit, the Governance Working Group has been maintaining a list of tasks, decisions and issues we are electing to pass forward to the elected governing body. As of the December 16 Community Call, that list includes:

- Refinement of Community Council election process, including regional diversity, term limits and voting process
- All other “governance build out” tasks - further enhancing
- Processes to approve and populate other GOSH working groups
- Management of Code of Conduct
- Further delineation of interaction, interfaces and boundaries between Community Council and the GOSH 501c3 non-profit
- Design of facilitation pathways to increase youth participation in governance and leadership

Open questions and unresolved issues

These issues are named in advance of exploring and discussing the the GOSH community:

- Candidate and voter eligibility criteria
- Formally defining the term “social minority”
- Timeline to election
- Exact mechanisms for election: process, tools, stewardship