



Governance Readiness

SustainOSS Working Group

Meeting details	
Title	Kick-off meeting
Date & Place	Tuesday, March 14th 2020, 18:00 UTC, via Hangouts (agreed via Doodle)
Attendees	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Javier Cánovas (<i>bottomliner</i>)2. Justin W. Flory3. Farbod Saraf4. Georgia Bullen5. Johan Linåker6. Tracy Hinds

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Short introductions
 - a. What is your main motivation to be here?
 - b. How do you think you can help?
3. Review of SustainOSS session
4. Goal of the Working Group
5. What to do next
6. Open questions

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Review of SustainOSS session

Dimensions discussed in SustainOSS

The session was celebrated on January, 30th 2020 and driven by Georgia Bullen who proposed an open discussion around three main dimensions, specifically:

Day-to-Day, which explores potential issues related to governance that can be found when developing OSS projects.

Barriers & Needs, which identifies the main challenges that may appear when dealing with governance definition and management.

Interventions. This dimension explores the possible actions to apply changes related to governance issues in OSS projects.

During the session, ideas and comments were identified via post-its. A picture of the collected post-its can be found [here](#), while a transcription of them are available [here](#). The transcription includes sections for [day-to-day](#), [barriers & needs](#) and [interventions](#) ideas. Elements of each section can be referred via its key in the list. We will use D, B and I key prefixes to refer the day-to-day, barriers & needs and interventions ideas.

Analysis and Clustering of Ideas Gathered in SustainOSS

The collected ideas have been analyzed applying an open coding approach in order to identify clusters or groups of similar concepts. As a result of this coding process, four main groups were identified, specifically:

Decision-making mechanisms. When dealing with governance models, it is common to study the decision-making mechanisms which have to be considered. For instance, it is commonly accepted that governance models should clarify who makes the decision or who can collaborate in the decision-making process. Some of the ideas which appeared during the SustainOSS workshop were: (D10) *Is the governance model acceptable to potential contributors?*, (D4) *Who should define the decision-making model? which communication model?* or (B2) *Accessibility of governance model*.

Community. The development of OSS projects relies on a community of users who contribute to their advance. OSS projects therefore capitalize on its community to keep them alive and to succeed. For instance: (D6) *How to deal with membership?*, (D7) *Who can actually contribute?*, (I1) *Removing bad actors*.

Methodology. As any development process, in OSS we also find affairs related to how the process is executed and its methodology. This group then collects all those issues which are crucial for reaching a successful collaboration model. For instance: (D13) *Who makes the decision of accepting a pull request? How much time does it take?*, (B14) *Communication methodology* or (I3) *Forking*.

Legal. This group deals with issues that may become burdensome in OSS projects as their requirements usually do not fit in the traditional company/copyright schema of proprietary software. For instance: (D1) *Which model is the most suitable (i.e., company, foundation, individual)?* or (B24) (I12) *Patents*.

A table showing the mapping between the ideas collected during the SustainOSS session and the identified groups can be found at the end of this document (cf. [Annex 1](#)). Note that a single idea can be classified in one or more groups.



Triggers for a change

At the end of the session, participants also discussed several triggers that may affect the governance of an OSS project (both as cause and/or effect). The list of ideas gathered can be found [here](#), which can be grouped into:

Sudden change. This group includes triggers involving a disruptive change in the OSS project, which can affect community, methodology or legal issues. For instance, the succession in leadership, changing core elements (e.g., license, acquisitions, etc.) or changing the ownership.

Violation of existing normative. Triggers that are included in this group involve a conflict with existing elements of the project. For instance, violations in governance rules (e.g., the actual decision-maker is not the appointed leader), legal issues or diversity & inclusion conflicts.

Implicit of non-existence of rules. Sometimes the trigger is related with the absence of specific elements in the project, which can include governance models or code of conduct, for instance.

Next steps

Once the *Governance Readiness* working group has been created, it is important to identify the next steps or route plan. Three main ideas were proposed at the SustainOSS session, which have been extended with potential tasks to address.

- A. Create a checklist of elements that have to be fulfilled by OSS projects. Potential working lines could include a checklist to (a) identify whether a project follows a particular governance model, (b) verify whether a project is being governed (in some way), (c) identify possible elements that may cause conflicts with project governance.
- B. Create resources (e.g., how-tos, organization examples, case studies). This task would involve contacting with relevant actors in the industry willing to report their experiences related to governance concerns.
- C. Conversations about the challenges. This task may involve the creation of resources (e.g., white papers, podcasts, etc.) discussing different aspect of governance.

Questions to Address

Some open questions to address during the meeting and foster discussion.

- Regarding the previous review, do you find useful/correct the classification?
- Regarding the goal:
 - What do you understand by “governance readiness”? (e.g., ability to be governed, things to change to enable a specific governance models, etc.)
 - What do you understand by “checklist”? does it refer to a methodology?
- Regarding what to do next:
 - What should be the most immediate target? (e.g., ways to represent governance models, catalog of models, etc.)
 - Should we focus on specific topics? (e.g., community, methodology, etc.)
 - When should we have the next meeting? monthly basis?
- Other open questions



Annex 1. Mapping table

Legend: D = Decision-making mechanisms, C = Community, M = Methodology, L = Legal

Day-to-day		D	C	M	L
D1	Which model is the most suitable (i.e., company, foundation, individual)?				X
D2	How to set the governing "body"? And what is it?	X			
D3	Which decision-making model should be deployed?	X			
D4	Who should define the decision-making model? which communication model?	X	X		
D5	Funding?			X	X
D6	How to deal with membership?		X		
D7	Who can actually contribute?		X		
D8	Which license should be applied?				X
D9	How to help with the vision of the project?			X	
D10	Is the governance model acceptable to potential contributors?	X	X		
D11	Who can have some influence on the way the project is developed?		X		
D12	Which structure should follow the project/entity?				X
D13	Who makes the decision of accepting a pull request? How much time does it take?	X	X	X	
D14	Who decides if my contribution will be included in the next release?	X	X	X	
D15	How to deal with accountability? which path should be follow?			X	
D16	Is there any kind of communication architecture?			X	
D17	How to promote onboarding to the governance specifically (e.g., videos, documents, Q&A, etc.)?		X		
D18	Who is the owner of the assets (i.e., domain, GitHub, CI/CD, etc.)?				X
D19	What is the importance of developing a corporate culture? how it may influence the governance?			X	
D20	How to deal with inclusion (i.e., Code of Conduct) and accessibility?		X		
D21	Which methods should be deployed for conflict resolution?		X		
D22	Do we need a contract for governance enforcement?	X			
D23	Which organization structure is the most appropriate? what is its level of responsibility?				X
D24	How the community has to organize itself (e.g., becoming a leader, a member, etc.)?		X		
Barriers & Needs		D	C	M	L
B1	License used				X
B2	Accessibility of governance model	X			
B3	Security process/maturity			X	
B4	Clarity of elements to be governed	X			
B5	Impact of governance	X			



B6	Safety concerns			X	X
B7	Identify contributions to governance	X	X		
B8	Organic growth	X	X	X	X
B9	Burnout consequences		X		
B10	Considerations in human-centric processes		X	X	
B11	Scope of the community		X		
B12	Transparency versus lived experience	X			
B13	Open source versus open governance	X			
B14	Communication methodology		X	X	
B15	Single point of failure			X	
B16	Bad press	?	?	?	?
B17	Money and funding				X
B18	Problematic models (e.g., BDFL)	X			
B19	Cult of personality	X	X		
B20	Ownership operations				X
B21	Power disparity	X	X		
B22	Experience with governance or community processes	X	X		
B23	Transition of models	X		X	
B24	Patents				X
B25	Remote versus in-person workers		X		
Interventions		D	C	M	L
I1	Removing bad actors		X		
I2	Make a pause (give space/time)		X	X	
I3	Forking			X	
I4	Decentralization	X			
I5	Descaling + breaking down problems		X		
I6	Dissolution				X
I7	Federation				X
I8	Work on gaps that you are identified		X		
I9	Document the implicit unknown			X	
I10	Ask for (external) help		X		
I11	Change the model	X			
I12	Patents				X
I13	Incentives		X		
I14	Risk assessment			X	
I15	Incubation			X	