Governance Plan for Seating the 2022-2023 GOSH Community Council

Overview

What follows is the GOSH governance plan for seating the 2022-2023 GOSH Community Council; this document is a result of a reflection on the 2021 election and a listening process ("Listening Working Group") initiated by members of the first Community Council (2021-2022), including a survey and call for feedback for the GOSH community via the forum and other channels. This document is based on the [previous GOSH Governance Plan drafted by the 2020 Governance Working Group](#).

The Listening Working Group understands our responsibility is to put in place the structure and processes necessary to elect and formally seat the next GOSH Community Council for 2022-2023. This document reflects that scope, and is built on the governance plan for the 2021 election. For this purpose, the Listening Working Group considers our remit to be proposing a "patchset" for the previous governance plan. We include in this document the plan for the 2022 Community Council Election and a list of the issues and decisions we plan to pass forward to the new Community Council that we could not adequately address this time, all resulting from listening to the GOSH community.

This document is divided into four parts:

1. The vision that informs this document for GOSH community governance;
2. Governance framework, summarizing decisions and recommendations made to this point, including a name, scope of responsibility and size for the governing body ("Community Council"), as well as eligibility criteria for voting and candidacy;
3. A summary of the election process;
4. Decisions the current Community Council and Listening Working Group have elected to defer and pass forward to the elected governing body.

1. The vision that informs this plan for GOSH community governance

The Listening Working Group and the 2021-2022 GOSH Community Council 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.

We might not achieve this all in one go, but will aspire to get as far as we can!

In terms of composition of the governing body, we consider it critical that it should ultimately

exhibit:

- An overall balance on gender, race, ethnicity, profession, field and discipline;
- 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 non-governmental organizations (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 in and contributing to the GOSH community;
- Work transparently and in an accountable way in collaboration with the community to further define and enrich GOSH community governance practices and norms.

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

- An odd number of members, in order to avoid voting deadlocks (if voting is used to make decisions);
- A reasonable group size that strikes an acceptable trade off 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 *do not* want to see in the governing body:

- Governing body members from one region dominating the group;
- Governing body members who are not committed to fully delivering on the responsibilities of the role;
- People who are unfamiliar with, do not abide by 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 that would compromise their ability to be trusted in a governing role.

2. Governance framework

What follows is the framework designed to elect and seat a GOSH governing body. The elected body would have as their remit the responsibility to continue reviewing, further defining, and implementing governance norms and practices for the GOSH community.

Name of governing body and those who are elected to it

After discussion about what would be appropriate language within GOSH's community norms, we are continuing with the formal name of the GOSH governing body as the "**Community Council**". The elected will be referred to as Community Council Members, Members of the community council, or Community Councilors.

Scope of Community Council

The Community Council 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 that are not fully realized by the current Community Council (2021-2022). Further specifics on pending governance work can be found in the section "Deferred decisions to be passed forward to the future Community Council".

Number of Community Council members

The size of the first Community Council is a maximum of 7 members, and a minimum of 3.

After discussion and reflection, the current Community Council believes this number is large enough to enable a broad and diverse set of community council members, 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 process is described later in this summary. This document will describe the updated process for electing and seating the Community Council for 2022-2023.

Eligibility for nominations and for voting

All members of the GOSH community are eligible and encouraged to vote. If you have engaged with GOSH in any way then we consider you a member of our community, and we really would like your vote. This includes — but is not limited to — forum members who have posted at least twice since the last election in 2021, members of the AfricaOSH WhatsApp or ReGOSH Telegram groups, and any attendees of the previous GOSH Gatherings or regional GOSH gatherings (AfricaOSH, ReGOSH, etc). Have you engaged in a different way? Please let us know, if you think you are part of this community, you probably are! Anyone who has participated in the GOSH community this way will be eligible to both vote and run for a seat on the Community Council.

Community members can indicate other forms of active participation, as we understand this is a new set of criteria and likely to be incomplete. In general, the current Community Council will prioritize inclusion, and will exercise flexibility in matters of voter eligibility.

We recognise the need and desire for a better definition of eligibility, which we plan to fold into a GOSH Constitution writing workshop. A separate process will be announced for how to organize and set up this workshop.

Community Council terms and term limits

The Community Council membership will persist for 2-year terms, with several 1-year terms seated in the first election in 2021 to enable staggered terms year over year.

For the 2021 election, candidates ran for a mix of 2-year and 1-year to start in order to establish staggered terms:

- The 4 elected candidates receiving the highest scores were seated for 2-year terms
- The 3 remaining elected candidates were seated for 1-year terms

This was intended to enable balanced annual turnover moving forward, with e.g. 3 or 4 new members being elected each year. After this first election, all open seats will be for 2-year terms in subsequent elections. Therefore, the 2022 election will select 3 candidates to serve 2-year terms.

All elected Community Council members shall serve for at most 2 consecutive terms, regardless of term length.

No sitting Community Council member can run for re-election more than once while seated. Former Community Council members may run for election again after being off the Community Council for 1 or more terms.

In the case that a Community Councilor has to leave, step down, or becomes incapacitated, et cetera, and sends a formal letter announcing they are stepping down from the Council and leaving their seat vacant, either 1) the Council collectively decides to continue with one less member; or 2) the election secretary reviews voting results and chooses the next highest vote recipient that meets quota to complete the remainder of the term.

In the case that a Council member does not participate in meetings nor in email discussions for a period of 2 months, or is otherwise unreachable, the election secretary will declare this seat forfeit. See above for addressing this vacancy.

As an example, all those elected to the initial Community Council will be eligible to run for reelection one time, but if reelected for a second term, will not be able to run for a third consecutive Community Council term. After being off the Community Council for one term, former members would be eligible to run for election again.

3. 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 slate. Nominations will be done via EUSurvey.

For the 2022 election, nominated candidates can indicate whether they self-identify as fulfilling any combination of the following diversity criteria[1]:

1. A member of a Regional Group. Regional GOSH groups currently recognized by GOSH include ReGOSH and AfricaOSH.
2. Individuals who are Women, Trans or Gender non-conforming
3. People of Color and/or Indigenous
4. From a low income country or/and community in Asia or elsewhere
5. Those from unaffiliated, community-based organizations/NGOs
6. Historically marginalized sexual orientations
7. People/persons with disabilities.
8. People who add to youth participation in governance, e.g. people who are younger than 25 according to the United Nations definition.

In this iteration, the current Community Council will ensure these self-identifications are credible and consistent with inclusion and equity objectives. Additionally, candidates can choose to reveal how they meet the diversity criteria listed above in their candidate statements.

The Election Secretary will serve in the candidate vetting role with any questions going to the Community Council, though there are potential conflict of interest elements to address and mitigate in such a model. If candidates identify themselves as belonging to a Regional Group, then the Election Secretary will ask the Regional Group's Community Manager to vet these candidates.

Time frames for nominations, candidacy and voting

The window of time for nominations is 2 weeks, within which any eligible community member can nominate themselves or others.

The window of time for campaigning and consideration of candidates is 2 weeks.

The window of time for voting shall be at least 10 days including at least 2 full weekends (Saturdays and Sundays).

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[1] Groups 2 through 5 are based off of the recruitment of participants for the GOSH 2018 Gathering in Shenzhen. This information can be found in the GOSH 2018 Final Report. Diversity criteria are meant to level the playing field for those who do not enjoy the privilges of being white, male, cis gendered, middle class, living in the Global North, or other advantage. Lots of discussion happened in this thread: https://forum.openhardware.science/t/equity-on-global-level-what-this-means/2746

Consideration and vetting of candidates

While candidates will be free to communicate with and engage the GOSH community in any way they feel is appropriate, all candidates will be expected to participate in specific common activities:

- Posting of candidate position statements: Candidates will be asked to draft a short position statement, indicating why they are running for Community Council, their priorities for the community, and what they hope to achieve, along with a short bio. A basic template will be provided to candidates in order to encourage comparability of position statements.

  Position statements will be posted to a designated category on the GOSH forum, with community questions and comments enabled so that community members can offer feedback and pose questions.

- Community meeting(s) with candidates: Community meetings will be scheduled and announced to allow live discussion between community members and candidates.

  All election events will be organized to account for the following on a best-effort basis:
  a. How best to schedule the community meetings to as to maximize inclusion and global participation, and
  b. How to support multilingual participation.

Additional activities we will attempt to organize on a best-effort basis:

- Election secretary individually invites each recipient (or member of receiving team) of 2021 - 2022 Sloan collaborative dev & regional funding to nominate a candidate for the 2022 election
- Candidates would be asked to respond to a set of community-sourced questions: We believe that comments and questions on the forum in response to candidate position statements will provide a healthy level of interaction and accountability between candidates and the community.
- Community Meeting(s) with current 2021-2022 Community Council members.
- During registration, campaigning, and voting periods, add a pop-up on the website and forum with two buttons and no close "X" button because we want people to understand that a non-vote is still a choice:
  - "**vote now!**"
  - "I don't want to vote / **I'm not interested in voting**"
- A banner at top of the website starting with: "we want to do better: A more fair election with better results."
- At the 2022 Gathering in Panama, hold a Main Stage community-wide election autopsy like a community-wide assembly.

Election "Landing Page"

A page containing full information about the election will be created and posted to document the election process and support both candidates and voters. Elements anticipated to be on that page include:

- Overview of Community Council
- Summary of vacancies and terms
- 2021 Election Schedule
- How do I register to vote?
- How do I vote? (with visual step-by-step tutorial)
- How do I learn more about candidates?
- List of nominations and candidates
- Administration: information about election administration and roles

In future elections, this page could also include information on non-candidacy items to be voted on, such as resolutions if GOSH's future governance structure or constitution enables them.

This info page will be posted on the GOSH website (https://openhardware.science/).

Voting process

Voter registration

Eligible GOSH community members will be required to register to participate in the election.

As part of registration, voters will be asked to indicate how they meet the voter eligibility criteria defined above.

Registrations will be renewed annually via email in order to keep election rolls up-to-date.

For this second election, registration will be open for approximately 6 weeks, and will close 1 week before voting begins in order to provide adequate time for confirmation of eligibility and configuration of voter data in the voting platform.

The platform that will be used for registration is EUSurvey

Using a voting platform

The 2020-2021 Community Council has decided to continue the use of the STAR Voting platform (https://star.vote), which uses a combination of score voting, to pick two highest scoring candidates, and a "runoff" in which the finalist who is preferred on more ballots wins. You can read more about the STAR Voting platform and its methodology here.

The platform is fully open source and doesn't use proprietary identification systems. We also see benefit in using a model for the election that assures the outcomes can be clearly explained to all community members. The Community Council can revisit this issue when administering future elections. Some of the open discussion about this topic can be found on the forum[2].

Casting votes

The STAR voting process will allow each voter to express varying levels of support for all candidates in the same ballot.

Tabulating votes

Votes are tallied by the STAR Voting platform at https://star.vote

Awarding Council Seats

Community Council seats will be awarded by the Election Secretary as follows in order to make the seated 2022-2023 community council as equitable and representative as possible. An implication of this model is that candidates could be at risk of being bypassed for a seat in favor of a candidate from one of these groups who received fewer votes:

- A minimum of 1 seat to a candidate who fulfills the diversity criteria as enumerated above under "Nomination of Candidates". If there is only one such candidate receiving votes, they will be seated.
- Of the final 7 member Community Council, at least one seat goes to a member of ReGOSH, if there is not already a member of ReGOSH on the Council.
- Of the final 7 member Community Council, at least one seat goes to a member of AfricaOSH, if there is not already a member of AfricaOSH on the Council.
- If any open seats remain, they will be awarded to the remaining unseated candidates in order of who has received the most preferred[3] votes.
- Candidates with zero votes won't be seated.

Election Quorum

This Community Council election will not enforce a minimum quorum of voters. While we understand a quorum to be an important component of ongoing elections, the current Community Council is not equipped to keep re-running the election until a quorum is met. We are also confident that because all voter registrations will have taken place in a very recent timeframe, turnout is likely to be above any quorum threshold which might be put in place. We recommend that the elected Community Council revisit this issue and reconsider a quorum mechanism for future elections.

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[2] The address for these discussions are the following:
https://forum.openhardware.science/t/gosh-community-call-thursday-february-25th-1430-utc/2697/5 and https://forum.openhardware.science/t/towards-more-inclusive-polling-voting/2474/7.
[3] Preferred is a term of art from STAR voting which accounts for voting scores. Also see "Using a voting platform" above.

Administration of the election

The Community Council will administer the 2022 election. Administration of future elections will be further defined by the 2022-2023 Community Council once they are seated.

There are two administrative roles for this election:

- Election Secretary - The Secretary will oversee voter registration, administration of election processes and platform, technical support of voters and candidates, and tabulation and reporting of election results.

  For this, the GOSH Community Coordinator will serve in this role.

- Independent Election Observer - The current Community Council, with community input, will identify an Independent Election Observer. The Independent Observer will have access to review all aspects of the elections, affirming and ensuring that defined processes are being followed and providing assurance that a fair and inclusive election takes place.

  In particular, the responsibilities of the independent observer will be to:
  - Review and understand the GOSH election processes
  - Work with the Election Secretary to confirm that processes are followed
  - Review and confirm tabulated election results in collaboration with the Election Secretary,
  - Confirm winning candidates in collaboration with the Election Secretary
  - Confirm that reported election results match tabulated election results

Timeline for 2022 Community Council election

The working group has drafted a potential timeline moving forward for 2022:

- 28 April - Finalize election process, technology, managing and communicating results [i.e. final proposal published]
- 29-30 April Listening WG incorporate suggestions on dedicating two seats to currently recognized Regional Groups, and relying on Regional Community Managers to vet any candidates who self-identify as regional members
- 2 May - Listening WG send out email with final doc, seeking +1s from Council Members
- 4 May - Open independent observer nominations
- 10 May - Close independent observer nominations
- 12 May - Complete set-up of election infrastructure (platform, etc)
- 12 May - Appoint an independent observer
- 12 May - Open voter registration
- 13 May - Open nominations
- 6 June - Close nominations, open consideration of candidates
- 23 June - Voter registration closes

- 24 June - Voting starts
- 4 July - Voting closes
- 9 July - Community Council announced
- 26-29 October - At the 2022 Global Gathering in Panama, hold a Main Stage community-wide assembly to reflect on the Election process

This timeline will be revisited and updated as each milestone is reached, in order to make sure the election is executed in an inclusive, effective and successful fashion. The timezone for this timeline is [Anywhere on Earth (AoE)](#).

4. Deferred issues and decisions to be passed forward to the 2022-2023 Community Council

At time of writing, the list of further election issues to work on includes:

- Define the process by which further changes to the election process will be made, e.g. by the Council, or by community-wide vote. If community-wide vote, define this process.
- Reflect on this Community Council election in order to recommend any additional changes before setting up the next one
- Revisit term limits and associated rules
- Further delineate the interaction, interfaces and boundaries between Community Council and the GOSH United States-based non-profit or other organizations/entities.

Other community management:

- Formalize and manage Code of Conduct processes
- Design facilitation pathways to increase youth participation in governance and leadership

All other "governance build out" tasks to further enhance GOSH governance processes and practices will be folded into the putative GOSH Constitution writing workshop (details coming separately). Included in these tasks could be, but are not limited to:

- Revisit decision-making processes of the Council
- Formalize processes to approve and populate other GOSH working groups
- Develop how new Regional GOSH groups become recognized
- Refer to all Governance Domains imagined by the 2020 Governance Working Group: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TLk9n7bnZoTG6s0o6I4iyDbyJg9L9NvkJnPWS1FUZ14/edit#gid=2018954891