

Community Engagement and Board Representation

We have discussed this on a number of occasions and previously postponed the decision.

The organisation is situated within the open knowledge community, including the 9-11 Chapters around the world, and related communities pursuing openness. The flourishing of those communities is both an objective of the organisation and instrumental to our success.

How overtly do we want the community to be shaping the organisation's direction and priorities? And if so is a Board seat the way we want to do that? If not then we need to draw a line under this and find other mechanisms to engage.

Board seat elections - who gets to vote?

Individual voting for people competing to take on a seat on the board seems tricky as it is not at all clear who would be eligible to vote. One option could be that the 9-11 Chapter reps who are already selected by their chapters be on the Advisory Council become the electoral college. It could either be for one person amongst them or someone else not amongst them. If being amongst them is not a criteria for being a candidate, we would need to think through the process/criteria for nominating candidates to stand for the role.

The cost of voting is only really relevant if we go for direct voting by the community in general. We would really have to establish a membership system/mechanism for establish eligibility. If this is a broader direction of travel the organisation is considering heading down it would be worth considering this approach very seriously. However it doesn't seem appropriate to do this just for a board seat but would need to be part of a bigger vision/approach to the business model and vision for the organisation.

If we go down this route, then it will be important that the mandate and accountability of that individual is clear. While they would absolutely be there to represent the views and perspective of the community their ultimate legal responsibility is for the organisation (not their electorate - whether the council or their own chapter) and they are bound by collective responsibility of the Board. This would probably need to be included in the eligibility criteria for the role, which the rest of the Board would probably need to be the mechanism for assessment.

Possible language for Community rep/board member TOR

The community groups associated with OKI, including its Chapters, form the grassroots context of the organisation, and the organisation exists to support the movement's endeavours through various means: partnership on projects and similar ventures, promotion and publicity, connections and collaborations.

OKI also seeks to expand the reach of the open communities and broaden the appeal, to have impact 'beyond the bubble' where open is accepted and welcomed and to persuade others of the merit of 'open by default'.

Ways in which the Board may ensure adequate community representation in the shaping of the organisation include electing a representative of the open knowledge community (particularly of the community groups associated with OKI) onto the Board. General approach

While it is essential that OKI remains in tune with the open knowledge community and listens to the group's desires for the organisation's development and future, it is also imperative that OKI is run as an organisation and not as an extension, or summation, of the communities it seeks to represent. The open movement is vast and varied, and OKI cannot - and should not seek to - speak on behalf of all. Similarly, the organisation cannot put decisions on hold while the community as a whole determines a unanimous stance on an issue or decision. OKI will make decisions based on what those within it deem best. While it is inevitable that this will result in some areas of the movement being distanced or unaligned from the organisation, this should enable the majority of the community to see stances stated, decisions made and action taken that reinforces, supports and builds the open community towards a future where power is in the hands of the many, not the few.