# Samvera Governance Review Update

*January 2018*

The Samvera community and its partners has grown from an initial group of five founding partners almost a decade ago to a broadly based community of well over one hundred adopters with over 30 formally committed Partner institutions today. During that time, the successful stewardship of Samvera, its applications, and its community has been spearheaded by Samvera Steering Group and Samvera Partners. Recently, the Samvera Partners recognized the need to review our governance model and propose changes that address the need to resource the growing project and delineate open and transparent community processes. Therefore the Samvera Governance Working Group has been convened to develop recommendations to Samvera Partners and the Community to improve our existing community's governance model.

## Desired Community Model Attributes:

- **Community-defined roadmap or plan**: collaborative, involves appropriate representation from partner organizations [makes decisions], technical roadmaps for shared components[1] like Hydra Role Management and solution bundles like Avalon Media System.
- **Stable communication / coordination role** in the form of a person or group to manage change and coordinate work [gets things done]. This person is not a centralized authority (not a "benevolent dictator"), but rather an agent authorized by the community to coordinate efforts in alignment with community needs.
- **Formal contributions** from partner institutions [gets things done], and accountability from partners that they're meeting their obligations to the community
- **Plan to address anxiety** around how changes in governance / leadership structures could impact the community
- **Clearly articulated relationships** between groups that make decisions and groups that get things done

## Community Input and Work To-Date

At the conclusion of our Spring, 2017 Partner's Meeting in Palo Alto, CA a sub-set of Partners formed a  group to explore new governance models for the community to review, comment upon, and ultimately adopt.  All work this group created was publicly available and was commented on publicly. Fundamentally, we are looking to create a system that will allow for sustainable, reasonable, and participatory code and product creation. The work was meant to address three equally important areas:

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[1] See the Samvera Component Maintenance Working Group for technical work taking place in parallel to this group

1. **Sustainability** - How do we balance a need for reliable and consistent releases and updates without burdening all members of the community with an unrealistic churn in order to stay current?
2. **Planning** - How do we balance our resource allocation in a way that benefits all members in the community while recognizing that an outsized burden for product creation is currently held by a small number of institutions?
3. **Inclusion** - Can we create a system that will allow for clear, inclusive, decision making on technical, community, and project related issues that is more representative than the current model?

The group created a RACI matrix oriented primarily around the technical aspects of the community's shared work, four models of governance structures[2] for the community to review and comment upon, a survey to gather those comments, a summary document of the survey comments, a presentation of the models[3], and a guided conversation about the models. Community and partner conversation was held in open forums at Connect 2017 in Evanston, IL.

## Models Under Review and Feedback

Over the past 6 months, four contrasting models, in addition to the current model, were discussed broadly within the community and attributes from each were commented on for fit within the community's goals. Pros and cons of each proposed model were identified[4]. While the Apache Software Foundation Model had qualities that the community highly favored, the feedback from the community demonstrated that a governance model should contain some of the following features:

- Resourcing and development priorities remained a top concern
- A desire for openness and transparency remained key
- While recognizing the value of funding to the community, a clear and vocal indication that contributions may also be measured by in-kind resources. It was also clear that future fundraising will be affected by resourcing, direction, and governance.

We expect the final recommendation might incorporate features from each of the models discussed to provide a recommendation tailored to the community's needs.

## Next Steps

To formalize a proposal for the community, a new working group was formed in January 2018.[5] Using the feedback provided to-date[6], the Samvera Governance Group will recommend a

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[2] The models were compared to existing organizations for ease: American Library Association, American Red Cross, Apache Software Foundation, and Samvera Foundation (akin to Islandora Foundation). Model document: https://goo.gl/7cjkUL
[3] Community Governance Presentation at Samvera Connect 2017: https://goo.gl/qidbDX
[4] See Appendix: http://bit.ly/2DFYY9g
[5] https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/samvera/Samvera+Governance+Working+Group
[6] See Appendix: http://bit.ly/2DFYY9g

synthesis model. This new model will undergo legal review for possible licensing issues and community review from partners and the broader community prior to the Partner's Meeting on March 29-30, 2018. Ultimately, the Samvera Partners will determine the path forward for the community. A published timeline can be found on the Samvera Wiki.[7]

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[7] https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/samvera/Samvera+Governance+Working+Group