

Samvera Governance Recommendations

Table of Contents

[Overview](#)

[Glossary of Terms](#)

[Governance Recommendations](#)

[Partners Will Provide Contributions to the Community](#)

[Hire a Technical Coordinator](#)

[Hire a Community Manager](#)

[Elect Partner Representatives to Samvera Steering](#)

[Associate Product Owners to Community Owned Components](#)

[Establish a Components Council](#)

[Establish a Method for Creating for Standing Working Groups](#)

[Delineate Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Prioritized Implementation of Recommendations](#)

[1. Identify Community Owned Components](#)

[2. Associate Product Owners to Community Owned Components](#)

[3. Identify Existing Steering Members to Serve on Steering](#)

[4. Hold Elections for Remaining Steering Seats](#)

[5. Develop a Partner Contribution Model Based on the Principles of Contribution](#)

[6. Update the Bylaws](#)

[7. Establish a Components Council](#)

[8. Hire a Technical Coordinator](#)

[9. Hire a Community Manager](#)

[10. Assess Governance Recommendations](#)

[Governance Working Group Member Dissent](#)

[Appendix](#)

Overview

In the [Samvera Governance Review Update](#), the Governance Working Group identified five desired community attributes. These attributes were identified to address concerns that have been voiced in the community:

- **Community-defined roadmap or plan** collaborative, involves appropriate representation from partner organizations [makes decisions], technical roadmaps for shared components 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

With these desired attributes in mind, the Governance Working Group has developed recommendations for clarifying and enhancing the Samvera Community’s existing governance model. The Governance Working Group also has developed a prioritized plan for implementing the recommendations.

Glossary of Terms

In order to ensure clarity and transparency throughout this document the Governance Working Group has developed the following Glossary of Terms.

Adopters. Active participants and passive users who may not be Partners but still add to the Community or derive benefit from it.¹

Bylaws. A rule or law established by an organization or community to regulate itself, as allowed or provided for by some higher authority.²

Community. Samvera Partners and Adopters.

Community Owned Components. A Component is considered Community Owned when it is promoted to the [Samvera GitHub](#) using the promotion process outlined in the [Project \[Samvera\] Labs Promotion Process](#).³

Components. Components are code repositories in GitHub. This may include either full featured products (e.g. Avalon and Hyrax) or smaller software elements like Ruby gems (e.g. hydra-role-management and hydra-derivatives).

Components Council. A group made up of the Product Owners for Community Owned Components.

Existing Steering. The current group of individuals that make up Samvera Steering. See the [Samvera Steering Group Membership](#) page on the wiki for a list of those members.

Partners. Organizations or individuals that have committed to the success of the Samvera Project by signing the Samvera MOU.⁴

¹ See: <https://samvera.org/samvera-community-sourced-software/governance/>

² See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/By-law>

³ Developed based on language in the following documents: Promotion Process: <http://samvera-labs.github.io/promotion.html>; Requirements for Core Components: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FV9NVJY5NI2x_J8Dn87pfruQdl8e8OdcotdMp8BskQQ/edit#; Community Framework: <https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/samvera/Samvera+Community+Framework>. Note that the Components Maintenance Working Group is in the process of updating the promotion process.

⁴ Develop based on language in the following documents: About > Governance: <https://samvera.org/samvera-community-sourced-software/governance/>; Community Framework: <https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/samvera/Samvera+Community+Framework>

Samvera. Community sourced software that provides a framework for repository applications within which Adopters and Partners can create local solutions or, alternatively, allow the community to offer “off-the-shelf” solution bundles.⁵

Steering. The to be established nine member body elected by the Partners.

⁵ See: <https://samvera.org/>

Governance Recommendations

The following are recommendations for enhancing the current Samvera Governance model. This section of the document outlines the recommended state for Samvera Governance. Following this section is a prioritized list of implementation steps that help to outline how we get to the ideal future state.

Partners Will Provide Contributions to the Community

Partners will be required to remain in good standing by participating in and contributing to the health of the Community. A committee of Partner representatives coordinated and/or selected by Steering will review the ways in which Partners contribute and remain in good standing on an annual basis. This sub-committee will make recommendations for any changes to the contribution methodology the Community employs.

Information on how a contribution model should be developed can be found in the Prioritized Implementation of Recommendations section below.

Hire a Technical Coordinator

A Technical Coordinator will be hired by Steering to coordinate development, align the technical road maps of the Community Owned Components, maintain a combined Samvera community roadmap, and facilitate resourcing for the Components' roadmaps, etc. Additionally, the Technical Coordinator tracks progress of, and facilitates communication between, relevant Working Groups and the Components Council.

This role acts as a communication pathway between the Components Council, Steering, relevant working groups, and members of the Community. It will engage with a number of related projects of interest to Samvera including, but not limited to: Fedora, IIF, etc. The Technical Coordinator will not be a Product Owner for any of the Community Owned Components.

Hire a Community Manager

A Community Manager will be hired by Steering to coordinate Community work including, but not limited to writing annual reports, planning the annual Samvera conference, coordinating communication, organizing partner meetings, facilitating partner calls, coordinating working and interest groups, etc.

This role would act as a communication pathway between working groups, interest groups, affiliated projects, Steering and the larger Samvera Community. This role acts as the primary conduit for Community-wide information collection and distribution.

Elect Partner Representatives to Samvera Steering

Steering will consist of nine elected representatives. The members of Steering will be elected from within the Partners. The Community Manager and Technical Coordinator will be non-voting ex-officio members of Steering.

Each Partner organization will have one vote when electing members to Steering. Steering members are elected to 3-year terms. Members of Steering may serve up to two consecutive 3-year terms. Steering members who reach their term limit must wait three years before running for another term on Steering. Former members of Steering may be invited back to attend Steering Meetings in an advisory capacity to help facilitate knowledge transfer.

Each Partner institution can have only one Steering member. If a member of Steering changes institutions resulting in more than one person from the same institution serving on Steering, one member will need to step down and a special election will be held to finish out the term of the originally elected individual.

Steering will elect from within its members a Chair and Chair-Elect. The Chair-Elect is elected by the members of Steering for a one-year term and is only eligible to run as they move from the first to second year of their term. The Chair-Elect succeeds the position of Chair immediately following their term as Chair-Elect. The Chair, working in close collaboration with the Chair-Elect, will facilitate Steering meetings, and act as a conduit for communication with the Community Manager and Technical Coordinator to Steering.

Steering will meet virtually at least once a month with additional virtual meetings as needed. Steering will meet in-person at least once a year to discuss budget and financial issues. Steering may choose to meet in-person more often, depending on attendance, as desired.

Associate Product Owners to Community Owned Components

Based on the work of the [Components Maintenance Working Group](#), each Community Owned Component must have an identified Product Owner. The percentage of time this role dedicates to a Community Owned Component may vary depending on the Component.

Individuals serving as Product Owner for a Community Owned Component do not need to be permanently assigned to the role, however it must be clear who occupies the role for each of the Community Owned Components. Additionally, the Partners should make it clear to those who elect to serve in the Product Owner role how much time and attention is required when taking on this role for a Community Owned Component.

When an identified Product Owner takes a step back from the role, the Partners must acknowledge this change and identify another individual to continue the work. The Technical Coordinator should work with the Community to identify who will fill the vacant Product Owner role.

The Technical Coordinator in conjunction with the Components Council, should develop a process for identifying Product Owners and discerning the amount of time an individual must spend to fill the roles. The Technical Coordinator and Components Council should clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for the Product Owners to ensure that these roles are empowered to make the best decisions for Community Owned Components.

Establish a Components Council

Currently, the Component Maintenance Working Group is developing the following for the Samvera Community:

- Report on criteria for what makes a “core” supported component.
- Report on effects of self-nominated Product Owners process
- Proposal for component sunset (inventory and process)
- Prospective Product Owners and a small list of development priorities for supported core components
- Measurement of and process for determining the use of Samvera components.

To facilitate communication across Community Owned Components a Components Council should be established. The Components Council would include Product Owners for each of the Community Owned Components and be facilitated by the Technical Coordinator. In the event there is no Technical Coordinator, the Components Council will elect a facilitator from within its ranks.

Once established, the Components Council would align product road maps, arrange for development and maintenance sprints, and coordinate communication to the community about Community Owned Components.

The Components Council will meet at least monthly to discuss roadmaps for the Community Owned Components, maintenance sprints, development sprints, and communications to the community. The facilitator of the Components Council will report out to the Samvera Tech Call.

Establish a Method for Creating for Standing Working Groups

It may become necessary to develop standing working groups for larger components (e.g. Hyrax) or groups that fill an ongoing need in the community (e.g. Helpers). Therefore Steering should develop a method for creating, chartering, and assessing Standing Working Groups.

Delineate Roles and Responsibilities

For each of the groups identified in these governance recommendations, consistent and clear charters should be developed. The charters should identify what activities are in scope and out of scope for the groups, how often the groups should meet, what the roles and responsibilities are within the group (i.e. facilitator, member, etc.), and a process for reviewing the charter on a regular basis. The charters for each group should be ratified by the Partners via a vote, similar to the method identified for electing Steering.

To ensure that governance groups are clearly communicating with the Community, the groups should report out to the Partners at least on an annual basis.

- **Working Groups and Interest Groups** report out about their activities to Partners
- **Components Council** reports out about work accomplished and product roadmaps.
- **Steering** reports out about finances, budgets, fundraising efforts, etc.

Ideally, these activities would happen via multiple streams (i.e. a partner meeting and the Annual Report) to ensure Partners have the ability to ask questions and engage with the Community's work.

Prioritized Implementation of Recommendations

This section prioritizes the work to implement the recommendations outlined above. The sections are prioritized with one (1) being the work that should happen first, and ten (10) be the work that should happen last. Some of these suggestions build on one another so the order of operations may matter (i.e. you cannot hire positions without first developing a contribution model that helps the Community raise funds).

1. Identify Community Owned Components

Currently, the [Components Maintenance Working Group](#) is in the process of identifying criteria for Community Owned Components and sunsetting deprecated ones. This work should continue.

2. Associate Product Owners to Community Owned Components

Currently, the [Components Maintenance Working Group](#) is in the process of identifying Product Owners for the Community Owned Components. This work should continue.

3. Identify Existing Steering Members to Serve on Steering

Three (3) existing members of Steering will serve on Steering for the purposes of on-boarding, knowledge transfer, and succession planning. Existing Steering members will choose from within their ranks who will serve on the reconstituted Steering and when they will roll off. Existing Steering members who roll onto the new Steering will roll off in year 1, 2, and 3.

Existing Steering members who serve on the reconstituted Steering are immediately eligible for re-election for a second term. Existing Steering members who do not serve on the reconstituted Steering are eligible for election during the first election cycle. Should they be elected, they are eligible to run for a second term once the first term is completed.

4. Hold Elections for Remaining Steering Seats

The Governance Working Group will manage the initial elections for Steering. This group will send out a call for candidates, set the date of elections, send out information to the community about candidates, choose the method for voting, open elections, close elections, and notify the Community of the results. Should a member(s) of the Governance Working Group choose to run for Steering, they will be asked to abstain from facilitating the elections process. Subsequent elections will be the responsibility of the Community Manager. If there is no Community Manager, Steering will identify members from within Partners to help facilitate elections.

At the time of the first election, the Partners will elect six (6) candidates to Steering. Each candidate up for election will be volunteering for a 1, 2, or 3, year term, candidates will make this known in advance of the election. This will ensure that eventually the Community has a consistent number of people rolling on and off Steering.

5. Develop a Partner Contribution Model Based on the Principles of Contribution

In the course of writing this document, the Samvera Governance Working Group spent a great deal of time discussing a Partner Contribution Model. In doing so, we were able to develop four principles of contribution for the Partners. Those four principles are:

Equity. The Samvera Governance Working Group realized there was a need to ensure that Partners with fewer resources have a voice within the Community. We discussed a variety of ways to determine how a Partner might contribute. Some questions we asked ourselves were: a) How do we ensure that Partners with fewer resources have a seat at the table? b) How do we classify Partners to ensure they are providing appropriate resources to the Community? c) Do we create a tiered resourcing solution (i.e. Gold, Silver, Bronze) based upon resource contributions? d) Do we determine resource contribution based on a Partner's annual budget or [Carnegie classification](#)? e) Do we develop a different contribution model for vendors? and; f) Can we utilize information we already have to classify Partners?

Good Standing. The Samvera Governance Working Group believes that there may be multiple ways to contribute. Rather than holding Partners to one method, we suggest identifying multiple ways of determining whether or not a Partner is in good standing with the Community. This may mean developing multiples way of contributing resources (human, monetary, or otherwise) to the Community.

Incentives. While up until now, the Community has been able to raise a significant amount of funds, the Samvera Governance Working Group recognizes that to fund two full-time positions the Community will need to have consistent income. To ensure there are consistent funds for the positions proposed within these recommendations, we discussed providing incentives to Partners depending upon their contributions. Suggestions included a) a spot on steering b) number of votes in partner elections and c) the knowledge that you are advancing open source repository solutions for libraries, archives, and museums..

Valuing In-kind Contributions. In-kind contributions (i.e. devoting staff time), is one way Partners currently contribute to the Community. The Samvera Governance Working Group recognizes the need to weigh a variety of factors around valuing in-kind contributions including, a) How do we value staff members' time as a dollar amount? b)

How do we value vendor's In-kind contribution? c) How do we weigh in-kind contributions against the need for consistent funds for the Community's two full-time staff positions. d) How do we ensure in-kind contributions are met?

The Samvera Governance Working Group recognizes there is a need to spend focused time and attention on developing a Partner Contribution Model. We also recognize that adhering to some of these principles may require the Community to make more recommended changes to governance (e.g. see the recommendations around voting and seats on Steering in the Incentives principle above). Unfortunately, the short time frame the Group was working within did not allow us to devote time and attention to developing a model that takes all of these principles into account. Instead of hastily developing a model, Steering should identify and appoint members to Partner Contributions Model Working Group. The members for this new working group should draw from the Samvera Governance Working Group, Existing Steering, reconstituted Steering, and Partners.

6. Update the Bylaws

Once candidates are elected to Steering and begin their first term, Steering will need to update the Community's [Bylaws](#) and develop a charter for Steering using these recommendations as a framework. The Bylaws should include a section on Standing Working Groups. The Bylaws should be ratified by Partners using the method for electing Steering and reviewed by Steering and Partners at the annual Partners Meeting.

7. Establish a Components Council

Once Product Owners are associated with Community Owned Components, the Components Council should develop a charter. The charter should identify what activities are in scope and out of scope for the Components Council, how often it should meet (at least monthly), what the roles and responsibilities are within the group (i.e. facilitator, member, etc.) and a process for reviewing the charter on a regular basis. The charter should be ratified by the Partners via a vote, using the method for electing Steering.

8. Hire a Technical Coordinator

Hiring a Technical Coordinator will likely require a modification to the existing agreement with DuraSpace in order to articulate expansion of the existing relationship and expectations. In order to hire staff, the Community will need to raise adequate funds for the position. Additionally, Steering will work with DuraSpace to develop a job description, recruit, and hire for the position.

9. Hire a Community Manager

Hiring a Community Manager will likely require a modification to the existing agreement with DuraSpace in order to articulate expansion of the existing relationship and expectations. In order to hire staff, the Community will need to raise adequate funds for the position. Additionally, Steering will work with DuraSpace to develop a job description, recruit, and hire for the position.

10. Assess Governance Recommendations

The Samvera Governance Working Group believes that its important to provide some time to let these recommendations take shape before formally assessing them. Therefore, 18-months after electing Steering, the Partners should formally assess these Governance Recommendations to ensure they are meeting the Community's needs. Steering should identify and appoint members to a Working Group to survey the Partners. This working group will determine whether or not these recommendations are satisfying Partners needs and recommend next steps if problems are identified.

Governance Working Group Member Dissent

This section of the document outlines the recommendations members of the Governance Working Group disagrees with.

There is at least one voice of dissent as to which order we should hire staff. The majority of the committee felt that the Technical Coordinator role should be hired first because of the comments on the main page for the working group- <https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/samvera/Samvera+Governance+Working+Group>. However, it is valuable and important to point out that we, as a project, have historically ignored the administrative and non-technical aspects of the community. The recommendations outlined in the document above place a large administrative burden onto the new Steering Committee without providing them with dedicated support. As a community, we have repeatedly expressed a need for a Community Manager role, yet when given an opportunity to prioritize hiring one, we again placed the needs of the technology first. I fear we are sending the message again that this is a project led by developers and technology, not a project led by the larger user community. This may be a moot point as hopefully we can hire both roles concurrently, but if we are unsuccessful with raising enough funds for both roles, we are setting a very specific precedent which raises longer-term concerns.

Appendix

Diagram of Governance groups identified in this document and their reporting relationships.

