GOVERNANCE
Phase I: Establishing Governance

Activity 4: Structure? How Much Works Best for Your Program Now

Goals
1. Understand program needs in terms of more or less formality in structure.

Prerequisites
Example: None

Who Should Participate?
Current Governance participants, Community representatives

Length
90-120 minutes

Activity Instructions

1. As a group, discuss the questions on pages 2 and 3 based on the current state of your program. Then select the position on each line that best represents your program’s current state.

2. After discussing the questions, move to next steps on page 4.

3. In general, answers clustered on the left side of the number line indicate the program’s issues are more suitable for an informal structure, while those clustering on the right are more suitable for formal structure.

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### Program Purpose

**What is the purpose of your program?**

- Advocacy Oriented
- Service Oriented

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**How broad is the purpose of your program?**

- Simple/Single Issue
- Complex/Many Issues

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**How urgent are the issues that your program is trying to solve?**

- Low Urgency
- High Urgency

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**How widespread are the issues that your program is trying to solve?**

- Within one community
- Across scientific/cultural heritage

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**How long do you expect your program would need to solve these issues?**

- <1 year
- >10 years
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People in Your Program

How many years of experience does the leadership team have in leading OSS development?

< 5 | > 20

How many members (or stakeholders) are in your program, including board members, paid staff, and volunteers?

< 10 | > 200

What is the distribution of the membership types in your program?

100% volunteer | 100% paid staff

How many people in your program have worked together before

<10% | > 90%

How are decisions made in your program?

By consensus | By leadership
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Next Steps

Did your answers give you a clear indicator or a general trend for the preferred structure of your program?

If it is still unclear, revisit the following questions:

- **What is your common purpose? How broad is it?** Groups with broader purposes often have more complicated structures, complete with many layers and parts, than do groups with more narrow purposes.

- **Is your group advocacy-oriented or service-oriented?** Service organizations use "top down," one-person-in-charge structure much more often than do advocacy-based groups.

- **Is your organization more centralized or decentralized?** A decentralized group might find a "top-down" structure inappropriate, as such a group often has several peers working together on an issue.

- **How large is your organization? How large do you envision it becoming?** A very small organization may wish to remain relatively informal, while a community-wide group might require a more formal structure. A related question, with similar consequences, is: **How large is the community in which you work?**

- **How old is your organization? How long do you envision it lasting?** A group formed to resolve a single issue might not need a formal structure at all, while an organization with long-term goals may want something more concrete, with clearer divisional responsibilities and authority.

- **Is the organization entirely volunteer, or are there (or will there be) paid staff?** How many? An organization with many paid staff members may find it more necessary to have people "in charge," as there are generally more rules and responsibilities for paid staff members, and thus, there must be more supervision in carrying out these roles.

- **Should yours be a new organization, or part of an existing structure?** Do you really need to form a new structure, or would it be better to work within existing structures? Sometimes, your goals may be better met if you are part of (or linked with) another organization.

Consider

1. **Are there areas of general consensus or clear division?**

2. **Does your program need more or less structure right now?**

3. **Do the answers align with any of the models from Activity: Understanding Governance Models and Process Impact (Benevolent Dictator, Meritocracy, Delegated Governance)?**

4. **If answers are aligned mostly with any of one model, that is a good indication of your program’s current orientation.**