

Open Source Governance Models

 THE **LINUX** FOUNDATION

What Is a Governance Model?

- Any project needs organization to achieve its purpose
- How decisions get made and who makes them requires careful thought
- A project is still an open source one, whether or not:
 - Anyone can contribute or only a selected few
 - Decisions are made democratically by an authority
 - Plans and discussions are made public before releases
- How this is done determines the **Governance Model** for a project

Company-led: Mostly Closed Process

- Software design, development and releases are controlled by one entity
- External contributions may or may not be solicited
- Plans and release dates may not be described openly
- Internal discussions/controversies may not be aired
- Upon release, software is in the open
- Examples: Google Android, Red Hat Enterprise Linux

Benevolent Dictatorship: Strong Leadership

- One individual has overriding influence
- Project quality and success depend heavily on the dictator's wisdom and management capability
- Dictator's role may be social and political, not structural
- Maintainers write less and less code as projects mature
- Can avoid endless discussions and lead to a quicker pace of development
- Examples: Linux kernel, Wikipedia

Governing Board: Tighter Control by Smaller Groups

- A body (group) carries out discussions on open mailing lists and all decisions are made collectively
- Decisions about who can contribute, and how patches and new software are accepted, are made by governing body
- Much variation in governing structures, rules of organization, degree of consensus required, etc.
- Releases are less frequent, but well-debugged
- Examples: FreeBSD, Debian

