

# Scala Center Community Management and Governance Project

## - strategy proposal -

### TI;DR

Funding currently goes towards engineers and recent events showed that we need to fund community managers and invest in capacity building re community management. Below is a community manager plan. The annual cost can range between 90K and 200K. To fund this plan, we ask the Advisory Board to contribute additional, targeted donations (annually), aiming for the first payment to be made by September 2021. ***Is the Advisory Board willing to commit to this funding effort to sustainably address Scala's community management needs?***

### Summary

After more than 10 years of Scala development, creation and growth of the Scala community around it, the Scala Center was created in March 2016. The not-for-profit Scala language foundation, at the time team of ~4 junior engineers, with a clear mission: *For education. For open source.*

Over the last 5 years, Scala Center's role in the Scala community evolved organically, without appropriate "update" to our mission, team structure, or targeted finances. For this reason, we believe, a gap was created between expectations of the community, and the actual capacities of the Center to handle highly complex community issues.

In order to take the next step in fulfilling the expectations and appropriately assume our role as the central Scala community body, in tech and non-tech regard, Scala Center has to:

#### *For internal purposes:*

- Receive external guidance and training (capacity building) throughout the restructuring process
  - (re)Define the scope and role on the community issues
  - Raise funds specifically for these purposes
  - Apply the necessary internal changes
- Open a community manager position to work on related projects

#### *Towards community and stakeholders:*

- In collaboration with community stakeholders, propose and implement the governance model(s) and accompanying policies on these topics: project governance (SIP) and community governance (resources, trainings, reporting mechanisms and more)
- Create decision making bodies to enforce policies

Scala Center needs to be prepared to support and lead the ever-growing Scala community, with all its demands and issues that may arise. For the Scala Center team, this project has the highest priority, and is the key to unlocking the next phase in general community development. However, without the financial and time investment from the stakeholders (here including Advisory board members), Scala Center can't go far on its own.

The purpose of the strategy proposal is to generate the support and provide the necessary change in Scala community management striving towards a better, more welcoming, and inclusive community overall.

## Scala Community Management: Defining the issue(s) and opportunities

*Issues discussed in this section are based on the Scala Center's perspective: our experience so far, historical evolution of the Scala community management, expressed expectations, and internal resources and capacities. The actual definition of issues and elements are yet to be mapped out and identified, represented in the "First milestone" of the project.*

It's safe to say that the Scala community is more of a loose, decentralized collaboration between organizations and individuals working on many different aspects surrounding the Scala open source project, such as: libraries, compiler, tooling, events, community, spread between academia, industry, and community actors.

Historically, Scala has never had a centralized governing body, or a single company dictating its direction or handling community dynamics. There were many efforts in creating a tighter Scala project and community management, with little success..

In the meantime, Scala Center became seen as the organization that should be more involved in taking those responsibilities, even though no additional funds, personnel, or support were assigned towards attaining those goals.

Due to the most recent issues raised in the Scala community, which we addressed in "[Towards a more safe and respectful community environment](#)", we are more than ever determined to step in the role of community management and support those who are on the front lines, working with people, to make sure Scala community members feel safe and welcomed at Scala in person and online spaces.

We propose here an inventory of "missing elements" that should be addressed and put in place, if all of us want to achieve that goal:

### **Decision making processes:**

Problem: There are no defined decision making processes or committees assigned, even though there are many topics and collaborative efforts across the community. Only process that stood strong up until Scala 3 release was the Scala Improvement Process,

which also needs to be revised and restarted, since there's a whole new compiler and committee that didn't meet for a year.

Opportunity: With clearly defined topics, processes, and committees, we can set the true and effective community collaboration.

### **Community roles and responsibilities:**

Problem: The term “community leader” in open source bears a significant weight, so do its derivatives “organizer”, “moderator”, “author”, “contributor”, “speaker”. Those influential individuals may be or may be not aware of the expectations the community members have of them, that they are taken in a higher regard, looked up to, compared with, conformed to - their behaviour is under a closer look, as they step into the Scala community public space. But does anyone brief them on what that role is? Are there any guidelines, definitions? Or if the given role is misused, who is responsible to check it? Once again, there's a mismatch between the expectations and resources/capacities to deal with cases. Yes, most of the people are reasonable, lead by common sense, and mostly doing the right thing, but some might do better if shown in advance what the expectations are. This goes for organizations too, scope and enforcement of influence needs to be well defined - expectations need to be clearly set and properly followed with.

Opportunity: Being precise on these points would bring clarity for community members, moderators and organizers would be able to communicate expectations in advance, and many unnecessary fallouts could be prevented.

Note: many of the active members are volunteers. When defining roles and responsibilities, we need to be aware that the most work is done by people who volunteer their free time for bettering the Scala community, actively choosing to invest in Scala, and that at any point they may as well leave. Understanding how to support and encourage these individuals vs creating a demand culture, expecting them to deliver and provide on “our schedule”, how they are accepted and treated will make all the difference.

### **Scala Code of Conduct:**

Problem: Even though the CoC exists, it does not have the supporting mechanism/guidelines on how to enforce it. People are left to their own devices, with little to no training, or clear line of communication with other moderators (support network).

Opportunity: Developing proper policies and committees would help optimize moderators work, avoid friction each time an issue arises, and our community can start learning from our collective experience.

### **Harassment reporting protocol:**

Problem: This is tightly connected to the previous point, but has to be treated with more attention. Absence of guidelines, support networks, or even a kind of a centralized reporting mechanism leaves a lot of space for repetitive behaviour to go unreported and unaddressed. In turn it increases the chance that one person's repetitive bad behaviour affects multiple people, who leave the community and continue to influence their

surroundings (friends, colleagues...) to never join either. One person can do a lot of harm.

Opportunity: Being diligent, creating a safe space to report, followed by timely and clear action will encourage people to engage with our community, allowing for a true welcoming and inclusive community to thrive.

### **Trainings (capacity building) and support networks:**

Problem: In general, there's no investment in purposeful, accessible, targeted training/coaching material, capacity building, which is essential for ensuring the moderators are well prepared and confident as they tackle the everyday issues, online and in person. On top of that, support networks, experience sharing, open collaboration is not regular, it's mostly stemming from peoples personal relationships developed over the years.

Opportunity: Community leaders come and go over the years, moderators and organizers change, new situations develop → only by accessible and regular trainings can we ensure the transfer of knowledge, meaningful orientation, and community building.

### **Communication channels/platforms:**

Problem: The Scala community shows its decentralized face the most by looking at the number of platforms and channels of communication. Each author, organization, organizer continues to choose and frequently change their preferred place of communication. Yes, as technology advances, better platforms appear, but in the Scala community this is essentially so distributed, that it in and of itself confuses newcomers or in some cases isolates them in one or the other bubble.

Opportunity: Agreeing on a centralized platform, where all the organizations will have their channels open (even if they keep their own communication platform ecosystem also), we can ensure quality and consistency in moderation, decrease confusion for the newcomers, and optimize moderators workload.

This is not an exhaustive list, but is the one we believe we would need to start with. The Scala Center team has the capacity to lead and facilitate the conversations between stakeholders in finding answers to above-mentioned issues, but we cannot be expected to do it in isolation or that we impose decisions we came up with on our own. We will need guidance and support, which will be discussed in the next sections.

# Strategy

## Process and expected results



### *Executive Working Group*

We propose to form an EWG that would be up to 10 people, for a limited time,  $\pm 6$  months, who would work on deciding what are the next steps for the Scala community governance and management. We would already propose:

1. Martin Odersky
2. Darja Jovanovic
3. Advisory Board chair (TBD)
4. VirtusLab representative
5. Lightbend representative
6. 47 degrees representative

This WG would be guided by Adam Goodman, open source governance expert, in identifying the issues, mapping out the needs, and proposing avenues.

### *Community working group*

We propose to also form a CWG that would be up to 20 people. We aim to include influential community leaders, contributors, organizers, and others who would be directly affected (and/or participate further) by the topics and direction we plan to take the community management

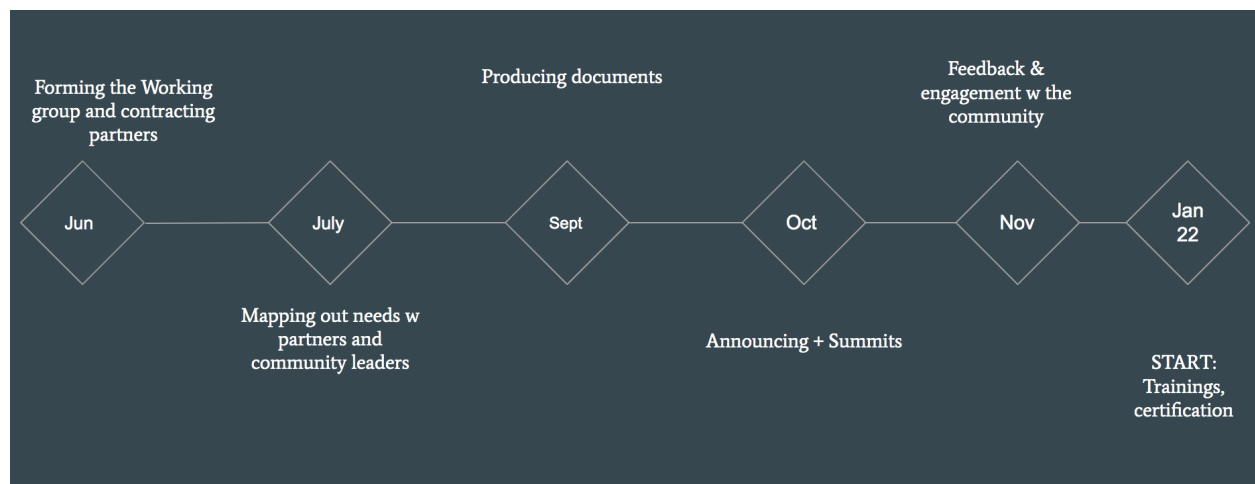
towards. Adam Goodman would work with them to further explore options and opinions aiming to get a clearer overview between the “wishes” and available will and capacities.

### *Consultants*

As mentioned, Adam Goodman would facilitate and navigate our two working groups in understanding what we need to do to create a better Scala community setting for the future.

AlterNeo on the other hand, will help us once we have decided which policies and protocols need to be developed. They are a law and mediation consultancy company with competences in multiple areas we would need to cover. Furthermore, once the initial consulting purpose is fulfilled, we plan to keep their presence to help us navigate different situations that may arrive in the future.

### Timeline



In short, together with major stakeholders and community members, by January 2022 we aim to cover the following milestones:

1. Map-out the needs and issues
2. Agree on fitting solutions
3. Implement changes, and
4. Introduce guidelines, resources, trainings (capacity building)

## Impact

More concretely, with the above-proposed strategy, tackling the listed issues, we aim to establish governing community committees, clear policies, guidelines, and capacity building trainings that would transform the experience in our community as follows:

Who	Expected change	Expected impact
Community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good orientation about how things work in the community</li><li>• Feels safe to report issues, ask questions, participate in the community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More newcomers, and more visible</li><li>• More Scala developers in general (growing community)</li><li>• Better perception of the community</li><li>• More reports, questions, engagement with senior Scala contributors</li></ul>
Community leaders: organizers, moderators, contributors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good orientation about how to deal with issues</li><li>• Who to turn for support</li><li>• Have channels of communication for their sub-community</li><li>• Feel supported by SC and other stakeholders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequent and high activity in org communication channels, collaborating on issues that transcend their scope, community issues</li><li>• Joint conferences</li><li>• Community leaders speaking about community management</li><li>• Community leaders asked to help other communities with issues they are facing</li></ul>
Scala Org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working closer together</li><li>• Becomes more like a knowledge hub, coordinating body/facilitator, less of a "putting fires" as they come</li><li><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feels supported by other stakeholders on community issues at all times</li></ul></li></ul> <p>(time, money, issues investment from others)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community issues are worked out without too much involvement of the Scala Org, less time dealing with concrete issues, more time working on resources, support, events, trainings (high-level support)</li><li>• Capable to scale our influence to empower other Scala orgs globally</li><li>• We are seen as good example from other communities</li></ul>

## Budget

Budget calculations are based on following items:

- Consultancies
- One person's year salary (community manager)
- Yearly trainings
- Yearly gatherings

Maximal total to set the project: ~200K CHF

Maximal recurring costs, maintenance: ~140K CHF/year

Minimal total to set the project: ~ 90K CHF

Minimal recurring costs, maintenance: ~30K CHF

Biggest variation of costs depends on employing a person at the Scala Center.

## Conclusion

Community building, governance and decision making around open source projects are as important as the development of tech. However, the time/resource investment tells a different story - and often it's a crisis that forces this balance to tip over, this is the case today. Scala Center team is confident that we share the same feelings with the majority of the Scala community when we say: we would like Scala to be known for all the fantastic work and hopefully for being a welcoming, helpful community going forward. We must do all that is in our power to set our community up for success, and create the necessary infrastructure. Let's use the rest of 2021 to make this happen, right in time for in person conferences and events, let's work together to make this priority number 1.