Chapel Technical Steering Committee: Kick-off Meeting

Brad Chamberlain, HPE
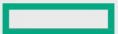
September 4, 2025

Outline

- Background

- Initial Discussion and Decision Topics

Background

Quick Introduction to HSPF

- HPSF = High Performance Software Foundation
  - A part of the Linux Foundation serving as a neutral hub for open-source HPC software
  - Notable projects: Spack, Trilinos, Kokkos, HPCToolkit, Apptainer, OpenCHAMI, E4S, …
  - Members (sponsors): AWS, HPE, LLNL, Microsoft, Sandia, AMD, Argonne, ARM, Intel, LANL, NVIDIA, ORNL, …
  - For more information: hpsf.io

Chapel and HPSF

- Since its origins, Chapel has proposed eventually moving to a community-governed model

- Reasons:
  — remove single-vendor barriers
  — give community more say over project's direction
  — requests from users

Chapel Design Philosophies

- A research project…
  …but intentionally broader than an academic project would tend to be
  - due to emphasis on general parallel programming
  - due to the belief that success requires a broad feature set
  - to create a platform for broad community involvement

- Nurture within Cray, then turn over to community
  - currently releasing to small set of "friendly" users
  - hope to do public release in late 2008
  - turn over to community when it can stand on its own

Chapel (75)

Slide from June 2008

- Doing it on our own felt daunting

- When HPSF was founded, it felt like a natural vehicle for doing so
  — HPC-focused
  — Top-tier HPC projects to learn from and work alongside

Timeline: Chapel's Journey to HPSF

Oct 1: Filed application to HPSF

Jan 9: Presented application to HPSF TAC (Technical Advisory Committee)

Jan 27: Informed we had been accepted

Feb–Aug: Working through legal aspects and documents with HPE and LF lawyers...
1. Contribution agreement: transfers HPE's stake in Chapel name, accounts, etc. to LF
   - notably: logo was not transferred
2. Technical charter: establishes legal governance of project

Aug 21: Legal documents seemed OK to both parties, but not yet signed

Aug 26: Began the work of forming the TSC

What lies ahead:
- get legal documents signed (waiting on a few things we'll discuss today)
- do PR push (blog, social media announcements, etc., coordinated with HPSF and HPE)
- ideally wrap this up in time to make a fuss at ChapelCon (Oct 7–10) and/or SC25 (Nov 16–21)

Chapel TSC Formation

- Typically, LF projects make all committers part of TSC
  - In our case, wasn't obvious that all committers would necessarily want to be
- Chapel team agreed to form TSC by inviting all current committers on chapel-lang/chapel
  - Received responses from all but two who were OoO (now just one)
  - of 23 committers, 13 accepted, 9 demurred, and 1 is still pending
- Polled those 13 about when to hold an initial meeting and decided on today
  - Note: TSC meetings must be public

TSC Members / Introductions

- Jade Abraham
- Brad Chamberlain
- Lydia Duncan
- Daniel Fedorin
- Abhishek Girish
- Ben Harshbarger
- John Hartman
- Engin Kayraklioglu
- Shreyas Khandekar
- Anna Rift
- Elliot Ronaghan
- Andy Stone
- Karlon West

Questions
- **Who are you?**
- **Relation to Chapel?**
- **What do you work on?**
- **Interest in / Goals for the TSC?**
- **Anything else?**

Expanding the TSC

- After bootstrapping, the TSC is designed to become open to community members

- Technical charter summarizes key elements
  - TSC votes in new members
    - Can also vote someone out of TSC
  - Members can resign at will
  - Key Qs:
    - What would we want to see from interested applicants?
    - Practically, how will we conduct discussion and voting?

- Speaking of the technical charter…

TSC TODOs

Short-term:

- Approve the technical charter
- Approve the GOVERNANCE.md document
- Decide whether to rename the project now
- Decide how to source a new logo
- Decide whether we want to create a TSC chair

- What else belongs in this column?

Medium- to Longer-term:

- How can community members join the TSC?
  - And whether we want to actively recruit
- What's our meeting cadence and structure?
- How are topics proposed to the TSC?
- What TSC forums should we establish outside HPE?
  - (Mailing list? Slack? Discord?)
- Does LF have a more formal voting tool to use?
- How can community members become committers?

- How about here?

Technical Charter

Approving the Technical Charter

- I would like the TSC to approve the technical charter before asking lawyers to sign it

- Current draft is here (hopefully TSC members have had a chance to read it)

- History:

  - We were given a boilerplate starting point from the LF

  - Sub-team was formed to review it, ask questions, suggest changes

    - **Biggest change:** Split TSC and Committers into two distinct roles

    - **Rationale:** Some will want to steer the project and language without merging code; and vice-versa

  - LF lawyers tweaked our changes further to their satisfaction

    - **Biggest change:** We are deferring the process of adding new committers

    - **Rationale:** Because we're unsure how to do so fairly but securely given testing on HPE systems

    - TSC owns task of defining this going forward

    - I asked HPSF projects for guidance this morning

Technical Charter voting rules

- Project aims to be consensus-based, but uses votes when needed / desired

- One vote per member
  - Implication: We'll need to distinguish between straw polls and formal votes

- Votes taken in meetings require:
  - 50% quorum for decisions to be binding
  - majority of those in attendance

- Votes taken electronically require a majority of all TSC members

- Debate / Discussion?
  - on technical charter
  - on voting process

- Let's vote!
  - Approve the technical charter as-is
  - Request changes or more time for discussion

GOVERNANCE.md

Approving the GOVERNANCE.md file

- I think of this as the less legal, more practical version of the technical charter
  - The tech charter gives the TSC the opportunity to modify GOVERNANCE.md over time
  - This permits us to tweak practicalities of governance without changing a legal document each time

- History: Upon applying to HPSF, we drafted a version describing how the project was run:
  - https://github.com/chapel-lang/governance/blob/main/GOVERNANCE.md
- While we were revising the technical charter, I opened a PR to better sync the two
  - And then updated it again for this meeting: https://github.com/chapel-lang/governance/pull/3

- We could approve this today or give ourselves more time if people need time to review
  - In any case, we can continue to modify it dynamically—not set in stone

Potential Vote

- Accept the GOVERNANCE.md PR as-is

- Spend more time / discussion on it

Rename Chapel (now)?

The Chapel Name: A Brief History

- Etymology: **C**ascade **H**igh **P**roductivity **L**anguage

- The name has generally been considered unfortunate since it was first coined
  - Due to potential religious connotations
  - But it stuck before we changed it

- Recently, there's been a reasonably serious movement to rename it
  - Formed a subteam to explore and propose alternatives
  - Focused on "C" language names to preserve the 'chpl' file extension, tool names, etc.
  - "Cascade" came out in the lead due to the connection to original name
  - Failed to successfully rename under HPE
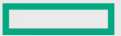 - Stopped pushing as HPSF started becoming a reality

HPSF and Renaming

- If we were to rename, the HPSF transition would be a natural time to do so
  - "Chapel is now part of HPSF, has this great new logo, and will now be known as _____"
- It would also delay the transition to HPSF further
  - Would need to debate and decide whether to rename
  - Would need to decide on a new name and have LF legal sign off on it
    - note: LF has suggested "Cascade" is a non-starter
  - Would need to update some non-trivial fraction of our resources to reflect the new name
- Not enough time to wrestle with this whole topic today, but could potentially decide when to
- Possible timings:
  - Prior to signing the legal documents (since they create an LLC with "Chapel" in the name)
  - After signing the legal documents but before the public PR campaign
  - Once we're under HPSF
  - Never

Options

- We should discuss more before signing the legal paperwork

- We should proceed with the legal paperwork

- We should discuss more before the public launch

- We should proceed with the public launch

- We should discuss more before embarking on a logo design

- We should proceed with the logo design

- We should discuss more after the public launch

Logo

The Chapel Logo: A Brief History

- Crowd-sourced by holding a contest to design the logo

- Winner by a large margin chosen by Cray executives and Chapel team:

- Cray branding cleaned it up, creating three flexible forms that we've been using:

- HPE is retaining the common law rights to the logo due to the potential for branding confusion:

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Logo Questions

- Do we want a new logo?

- Do we want it before we publicly launch?

- Should we form a subteam / working group to focus on this?

- How should we generate ideas?
  - Linux Foundation has a design team at our disposal
  - We can crowd-source ideas
  - Maybe we can do both? (have each generate ideas, have LF design team clean the best up)

Linux Foundation Process

- Provides 3 initial concepts in 2–3 weeks ("but can be done in a single day if needed")

- Iterates on one of them over 1–2 rounds (not sure how long these are)

- Input:
  - 1–2 sentence elevator pitch for project
  - 3 terms/adjectives describing project
  - choose design type: text only, icon + text, mascot + text
  - color palette: provide ~3 color choices in priority order
  - list 2-3 logos you like that resonate with you
  - list competitive brands to avoid visually and why

TSC Chair

TSC Chair Questions

- Do we want one?

- What would their role be?

- Who would be interested in it?

- ...?

@ChapelLanguage