

The spectrum of FOSS governance models

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Be conscious about governance, not formal
Spell out fundamentals such as license
Learn from others
Don't create foundations
Beware of growth
Keep your sanity
Be kind

Open Source Governance Models

"Governance is the **processes of interaction and decision-making** among the actors involved in a **collective problem** that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of **social norms and institutions.**"

-- *Wikipedia*

"Open-source software (OSS) is a type of computer software whose **source code** is released under a **license** in which the copyright holder grants users the rights to **study, change, and distribute** the software to **anyone** and for **any purpose**."

-- *Wikipedia*

"Open source governance comprises the **policies, processes, procedures** and also **tradition and culture** that surround the creation, development, deployment and maintenance of open source software."

-- *"Best Practices for commercial use of open source software: Business models, processes and tools for managing open source software", Karl Michael Popp*

Who decides?
How are decisions taken?
How is conflict handled?
What are the rules?
How are rules enforced?
How can I join?
Who owns it?
Where are the lawyers?
What about money?
What's the structure?

Does my project need a governance model?



Elements of Governance

Maintainer Model

- Social contract
- Permission model
- Process of becoming a maintainer
- How many maintainers are there?
- Benevolent dictator
- Common ownership
- Company maintains the project

Decision Making Process

- Lazy consensus
- Voting
- Empowered decision makers
- Not taking decisions
- "Those who do the work decide"
- Formal or informal?

~~Meritocracy~~

Idea is laudable but in practice conscious and unconscious bias get in the way.

Better be explicit and actively help people from where they are coming from.

Parable of the polygons: <https://ncase.me/polygons/>

Formality

- What is written down?
- What has a legal framework?
- How are roles defined? Are they defined?
- Bylaws
- Development model
- Code of Conduct
- Values
- Vision, Mission, Goals, Strategy

Legal Framework

- License
 - Permissive, LGPL, GPL, AGPL
- Contributor agreements
 - CA, CLA, FLA, DCO
- Trademark rules
- Patents?

Incorporation

- Is there an organization?
- Type of organization
- Umbrella organizations
 - Commons Conservancy, Software Freedom Conservancy, SPI, KDE
- On what scale does the organization operate?
- How much money is involved?
- Who is paid?
- What does the organization own?
- Who controls the organization?
- How do I join?
- What are the fees?



Governance Model Types

Single-developer

- One person develops and maintains the complete project
 - Informal
 - Occasional contributors
 - Can be a starting point for a project
 - Projects often get abandoned
-
- Examples: Typical project on GitHub

Benevolent dictatorship

- Big project controlled by one person
 - Governance not formal
 - Development process can be quite formal
 - Mix of volunteer and corporate interests
-
- Examples: Linux, PHP, Ruby

Informal Community

- Group of people working on the project
- Informal, de-facto maintainers
- Volunteer contributors
- Typical starting point for a project
- Friction when money or commercial interests come into play
- Examples: Early stages of formal communities

Formal Community

- Large groups of people working together
 - Defined structure, processes, culture
 - Mix of volunteers and paid developers
 - Significant effort to maintain governance
 - Robust and lasting communities
-
- Examples: KDE, GNOME, Apache, Node, LibreOffice

Single-vendor

- One company controls the project
 - Business model around the project
 - Some external contribution
 - Typically some CA/CLA in place
 - Trademark owned by vendor
-
- Examples: MongoDB, openSUSE, ownCloud, Qt, Docker

Corporate-backed

- Project backed by primarily one company but set up to be open
 - No direct business model around project
 - Not very explicit governance structure
 - Leeway for maintainers
-
- Examples: Visual Studio Code, Electron, React

Corporate Consortium

- Collaboration of typically big companies
 - Formal governance structure
 - Well-funded foundations
 - Dominated by paid contributors
-
- Examples: OpenStack, Cloud Foundry, Kubernetes



CLOUD **FOUNDRY**

Mapping Governance Models

Data

Open Source Governance Model Map

- Define attributes characterizing elements of governance
- Collect data for projects in machine-readable form
- Present data for overview and search
- Identify defining characteristics for governance model types
- Map projects to governance model types
- Opportunity for further analysis
- This is a map, not a navigation system

https://github.com/cornelius/open-source-governance

The screenshot shows the GitHub interface for the repository 'cornelius/open-source-governance'. The browser address bar displays the URL 'https://github.com/cornelius/open-source-governance'. The repository page includes a header with navigation links (Features, Business, Explore, Marketplace, Pricing) and a search bar. Below the header, the repository name is shown with icons for Watch (1), Star (0), and Fork (0). The 'Code' tab is selected, showing a collection of data about open source governance models. A summary bar indicates 8 commits, 1 branch, 0 releases, 1 contributor, and the GPL-3.0 license. Below this, a table lists the commit history with columns for the commit message, the commit hash, and the time since the commit.

GitHub - cornelius/open-source-governance

Secure | <https://github.com/cornelius/open-source-governance>

Features Business Explore Marketplace Pricing This repository Search Sign in or Sign up

cornelius / open-source-governance

Watch 1 Star 0 Fork 0

<> Code Issues 0 Pull requests 0 Insights


Collection of data about open source governance models <https://cornelius.github.io/open-sour...>








8 commits 1 branch 0 releases 1 contributor GPL-3.0

Branch: master New pull request Find file Clone or download

cornelius	Add first primitive version of home page	Latest commit 64dd82e 4 minutes ago
bin	Add first primitive version of home page	4 minutes ago
data	Add openSUSE	3 days ago
docs	Add first primitive version of home page	4 minutes ago
lib	Add first primitive version of home page	4 minutes ago
spec	Add first primitive version of home page	4 minutes ago
view	Add first primitive version of home page	4 minutes ago
CONTRIBUTING.md	Add mini contribution guidelines	2 days ago
COPYING	Add license	2 days ago

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{
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  "project_name": "KDE",
  "project_url": "https://kde.org",
  "project_founding_date": "1996-10-14",
  "organization_name": "KDE e.V.",
  "organization_type": "Gemeinnütziger Verein",
  "organization_country": "Germany",
  "organization_founding_date": "1997-11-27",
  "organization_url": "https://ev.kde.org",
  "organization_bylaws_url": "https://ev.kde.org/corporate/statutes.php",
  "development_governance_url": "https://manifesto.kde.org",
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  "contribution_agreement": "optional FLA",
  "trademark_owner": "KDE e.V.",
  "code_of_conduct_url": "https://www.kde.org/code-of-conduct/",
  "conflict_resolution_policy_url": "https://ev.kde.org/workinggroups/cwg.php",
  "maintainers_list_url": "?"
}
```

 <https://cornelius.github.io> x

     Secure | <https://cornelius.github.io/open-source-governance/kde.html>  

KDE

Project Name	KDE
Project Url	kde.org
Project Founding Date	1996-10-14
Organization Name	KDE e.V.
Organization Type	Gemeinnütziger Verein
Organization Country	Germany
Organization Founding Date	1997-11-27
Organization Url	ev.kde.org
Organization Bylaws Url	ev.kde.org/corporate/statutes.php
Development Governance Url	manifesto.kde.org
Organization Maximum Corporate Membership Fee	10000 EUR
Number Committers	thousands
Number Code Contributors	thousands
Statistics Url	?
License	GPL
Trademark Policy Url	
Licensing Policy Url	community.kde.org/Policies/Licensing_Policy
Registered Trademarks	KDE
Contribution Agreement	optional FLA
Trademark Owner	KDE e.V.
Code Of Conduct Url	www.kde.org/code-of-conduct/
Conflict Resolution Policy Url	ev.kde.org/workinggroups/cwg.php
Maintainers List Url	?

Let's investigate this together!

Advice

Be conscious about governance, not formal
Spell out fundamentals such as license
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Conclusion

**Governance, Policies, Rules, Guidelines, etc.
There is beauty in that.**

**But don't forget:
This is software development.**

It's all about people. :-)

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