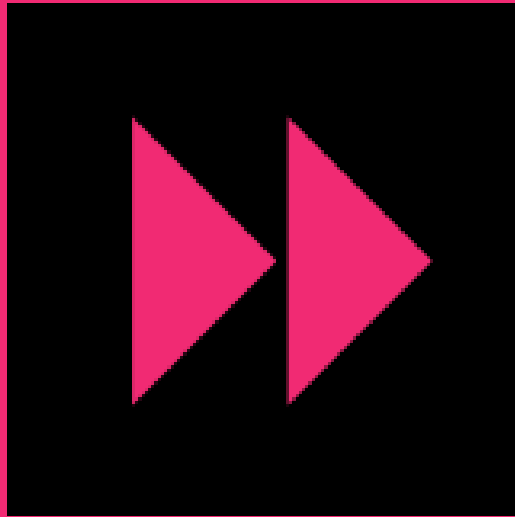


**On the State of the Awesome**  
*A Report*

**2010**



compiled by  
Tim Hwang, AF-SF,  
2nd Amit Gupta Chair  
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December 15, 2010  
prepared by  
Authorization of the  
Office of the Dean, AF-SF

yeah, this is pink.

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# Awesome.

## Introductions

Greetings! As I write this from the headquarters of AF San Francisco, The Awesome Foundation for the Arts and Sciences is advancing at a rate that's difficult to take calmly. Within the course of a year and a half, *what began as a small group of trustees in Boston has spread into an international alliance of chapters dedicated to sustaining and promoting the interest of Awesomeness in the universe.* We've funded things diverse as community farming initiatives, robotic lamps, and cotton candy weaponry to giant hammocks, emergency cell phone infrastructures, and an attempt to put the stars back into London's night sky.

Say what you might, that's at least dinosaur-with-a-jetpack levels of awesome.

As the Awesome Foundation grows, we've consistently developed new mechanisms for dealing with the challenges of scale while maintaining the advantages of staying true to the rule of being flexible, simple, and decentralized. *One of our persistent problems remains one of information.* There's a ton of fantastic and interesting things going on of interest to chapters generally, but no good aggregation (and it's undoubtedly a pain to keep up by digging through the mountains of e-mail that cross through the trustees list).

As we approach the end of 2010, AF-SF is making a first attempt at solving this problem by issuing a report that succinctly captures the current state of the Awesome worldwide. This will be the first in a series of regular reports we plan to compile and make to the Awesome Foundation community. We hope it will be of help to chapters generally, and encourage reports from other quarters and about other topics, as well.

So, by authorization and seal of the Office of the Dean of Awesome (AF-SF) Jesse Taggert, this report – “On the State of the Awesome” – is submitted respectfully for the consideration of the micro-trustees and Deans of Awesome worldwide.

All the Best,

Tim Hwang,

AF-SF, 2nd Amit Gupta Chair for Higher Awesome Studies

AF-Boston, 1st Tim Hwang Chair for Higher Awesome Studies (ret.)

## Chapter Update

We now have eleven actively developing chapters listed in Berlin, Boston, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, New York City, Ottawa, Providence, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. There is also a chapter actively coming together with Emily Daniels (formerly AF-Boston), Jade Applegate, and Jenny Lee to assemble a topic specific AF-Food.

The biggest space for regional growth in the past few months has been interest in booting up new chapters in Europe. With the launch of AF-London and AF-Berlin, word has flowed in for the creation of new chapters in Stuttgart, Sweden, and Switzerland.

## Upcoming Foundation-wide Projects in 2011

This section provides a brief recap on the general Awesome Foundation chapter initiatives that are taking place for early 2011.

### **The Institute on Higher Awesome Studies**

As the Awesome Foundation has grown, chapters have increasingly received interest from potential sponsors and other foundations for partnerships and other projects. However, since the Foundation has to date never incorporated as a legal entity, collaboration has proven difficult for individual chapters. With the help of Christina Xu (AF-Boston) and Alexis Ohanian, the Foundation is now pursuing the creation of an official non-profit, The Institute on Higher Awesome Studies, that will provide this legal infrastructure. "True to the model of keeping the Foundation as lightweight and decentralized as possible, IHAS will operate as an independent entity, with an open offer to collaborate and assist chapters as they need.

Other projects planned for IHAS also include encouraging the launch of new chapters in the developing world, coordination of cross-chapter events, and general experimentation with the Awesome Foundation model. It also plans to launch the Journal on Higher Awesome Studies, a publication that will collect notable projects and aggregate the current thinking and commentary about the Foundation.

### **The Awesome Summit and General Gatherings**

[Awesome Foundation San Francisco is planning to assemble a general retreat](#) for all micro-trustees (as well as fellows that have been funded) that can make it in April 2011. Events are planned to share experiences, and scheme for world domination. Stay tuned for details!

Also, if you will be attending the [South by Southwest Interactive Festival \(SXSW\)](#) in Austin, TX March 11–15, 2011, a general social meet-up is being planned. Announcement to be made on the general list closer to the date.

### **Assembling Best Practices**

The current method for the creation of new chapters remains relatively ad hoc. [It may be useful to have a basic set of information on-hand that can be provided to new chapters.](#) AF-SF plans to hold a hack session in early 2011 that will compile a basic “toolkit” of best practices compiled from the experiences of various chapters that can be made readily available online on the site.

### **AF-Food and Topic Based Chapters**

More by accident than by design, the Awesome Foundation to date has mostly expanded geographically, covering new regions as new chapters have launched. However, there’s no inherent reason why this needs to be the case. With the launch of AF-Food, one of the efforts in the new year will be to experiment with topic specific chapters, that will focus on funding and supporting projects in a particular topic space.

## **Enduring Questions**

The Awesome Foundation is an experiment in organizational design, as such, there are persistent questions for consideration that remain open. From discussions with chapters, three issues in particular seem key:

**Follow-Up:** What are the tools and practices that will enable chapters to build consistent and continuing relationships with funded fellows? How can project success rate be increased?

**Sustainability:** How do chapters maintain participation from trustees? How can chapters transition Deans and trustees gracefully from one person to the next?

**Billing Infrastructure:** Many chapters have developed their own methods for collecting funds each month, extending to everything from in-person collection of cash to the use of online services like WePay. Which makes the most sense for the Awesome Foundation?

## Appendix: Chapters & Contact Information

To aid in chapter-to-chapter communication and collaboration, listed here is every trustee that receives email from the the main e-mail list for the Awesome Foundation. Individual chapters often have their own lists that go to every trustee for that region/topic. (NOTE: All Awesome Foundation trustees are welcome on the main list! E-mail [tim@timhwang.org](mailto:tim@timhwang.org) if you'd like to be added.

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### AF-Austin

Joel Bush

### AF-Baltimore

Amy Webb, Dean

### AF-Berlin

Bastian Unterberg

Peter Bihr

### AF-Boston

Kara Brickman

David Nunez, Christina Xu, Erhardt Graeff, Evan Burchard, Keith Hopper, Jon Pierce, Reed Sturtevant  
Matt Blake, Mackenzie Cowell, David Fisher

### AF-DC

Bonnie Shaw

Alex Howard, Charlie Bengel, Frank Tobia, Peter Corbett, Philippa Hughes, Mark Drapeau, Eric Mills, Garlin Gilchrist

### AF-Food

Jennifer 8. Lee

Jade Applegate

Emily Daniels, Ramanot Singh Bhatia

Dan Barber, Jeff Potter, Amanda Hesser, Josh Simon, Kamal Rashid Nuri, and Soraya Darabi

### AF-Los Angeles (AF-LA)

Dan Taberski

Kevin Driscoll, Victoria Young

### AF-London

Jane ni Dhulchaointigh

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### AF-Phoenix

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### Institute on Higher Awesome Studies

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## Appendix II: Awesome Worldwide



### ESTABLISHED 2010

- 1 Boston, Massachusetts USA
- 2 Providence, Rhode Island USA
- 3 New York, New York USA
- 4 San Francisco, California USA
- 5 Ottawa, Ontario CANADA
- 6 London ENGLAND
- 7 Los Angeles, California USA
- 8 Washington, District of Columbia USA
- 9 Berlin GERMANY
- 10 Food EARTH

### LAUNCHING 2011

- A Baltimore, Maryland USA
- B Melbourne, AUSTRALIA
- C Austin, Texas UNITED STATES
- K SWEDEN
- L Belgrade SERBIA

### POSSIBLY, MAYBE

- D SWITZERLAND
- E LAOS
- F Vellore INDIA
- G Houston, Texas UNITED STATES
- H Maui, Hawaii UNITED STATES
- I Toronto, Ontario CANADA
- J Columbus, Ohio USA

Map and report design by Jesse Taggart