The Path Towards Open Metagovernance Design

The Optimism Foundation stewards the development of the Optimism Collective's governance system. The process by which the Collective takes on more responsibility for the system is iterative, facilitated by the Foundation based on community feedback. The Collective will gradually take on more governance responsibilities over time until the full system is maintained and managed by the Collective. It is at this point the system's design must be adaptive, with the Foundation just one of many contributors proposing design changes to the system (metagovernance.)

We've heard your feedback regarding more transparency and involvement in the path towards open metagovernance design. This post outlines our current approach to governance design as well as an experimental path to community led metagovernance design.

Overview of Governance Design (Illustrative)

[

Untitled

2265×1348 115 KB

](https://global.discourse-cdn.com/business7/uploads/bc41dd/original/2X/2/28a2d9839e99ca594dee44d925a6ae491055e1d4.png)

1. Hypothesis

: Based on learnings, community feedback, and/or internal milestones (4), a hypothesis is developed for how a change in governance design could help us further achieve our governance system design goals (to be open sourced at a later date.) 1. A hypothesis is informed by a number of factors, including governance goals & design requirements that have been identified following our governance design process (to be open sourced at a later date.)

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   2. Experiment

: The hypothesis is tested via a time-bound, and ideally isolated, experiment (if/when possible).

   1. Measure & Analyse

: The performance of the experiment is analysed and measured. Right now, much of this occurs qualitatively (via surveys, informal feedback, retrospectives, etc.) but we strive to incorporate more quantitative measures as the system evolves.

   1. Learnings & Iteration:

Based on the synthesis of qualitative feedback from governance participants and analysis (3), the hypothesis is proven/disproven. Learnings are then documented and shared, informing new hypotheses.

Community involvement in Governance Design

[

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2265×1901 203 KB

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1. Hypothesis

: Hypotheses are developed using several inputs that feed into our governance design process, which is informed by our design principles and the full context of the design goals of the governance system. 1. Inputs include: 1. Learnings from previous cycles (4)

   1. Community ideas

   2. The Foundation's governance milestones and goals

   3. Learnings from previous cycles (4)

4. Community ideas

5. The Foundation's governance milestones and goals

6. The Foundation uses these inputs to develop a hypothesis and proposes an experiment to test it; these hypotheses may come directly from community members.

7. The proposed hypothesis and experiment are published to the forum and governance participants provide feedback.

8. Examples: [Guide to Season 5](), [Retro Funding 3 Round Design](), [Moving to a Grants Council]()

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10. Inputs include:

11. Learnings from previous cycles (4)

12. Community ideas

13. The Foundation's governance milestones and goals

14. Learnings from previous cycles (4)

15. Community ideas

16. The Foundation's governance milestones and goals

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21. Experiment

: (If possible) The hypothesis is tested via a time bound, and ideally isolated, experiment. 1. The Foundation will propose an experiment to be run for the length of a round or Season. Sometimes a longer trial period is proposed. Subsequent extensions are subject to governance renewal, following retrospectives 1. Example: [Protocol Delegation Program Renewal]()

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2. Experiments are tested on the smallest scale practical to start

3. Example: The concept of a [Code of Conduct Council]() is being tested only in the Token House, before any possible extension to the Citizens' House

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11. Measure & Analyse

: The performance of the experiment is measured and analysed. 1. There are several sources of feedback that inform (3) 1. Community-led Quantitive Analyses: The community leverages quantitive data to analyse the performance of the experiment 1. Example: [Retro Funding Voting Simulations]()

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2. Community Sourced Qualitative Feedback: The Foundation conducts feedback surveys to evaluate all programs; Councils, Boards, and Commissions must conduct retrospectives at the end of their terms; informal feedback is documented by the Foundation and collected on an ongoing basis via [feedback threads](#)

3. Example: During Retro Funding 3, the Foundation documented 300+ pieces of feedback

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5. Foundation Measurements against Desired Outcomes: The Foundation aims to share these ahead of experiments this year as we've hired a Research and Experiments Lead to bring more rigour to this part of the process

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28. Learnings & Iteration

: Based on the synthesis of step (3), the hypothesis is proven/disproven. 1. Learnings are documented and shared 1. Example: [Retrospective on Retro Funding 3](#), [Retrospective on Missions v1](#)

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2. The Foundation develops new hypotheses based on these learnings, utilising our governance design process, informed by the [DAO Design Principles](#) and our governance design goals

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The Path to Open Metagovernance

The Foundation's approach is to develop the governance system gradually, learning and adapting over time. The path to open metagovernance will, similarly, occur gradually over multiple phases. The phases outlined below are likely to change in accordance with our design process. Even so, open sourcing this outline is itself an important step towards Phase 1 (below).

Phase 0 (Current state):Community informed design process

- The Optimism Foundation proposes designs based on active input from governance participants, as outlined in the graphic above.

- Examples: Token House Seasons are designed and iterated on based on delegate feedback. Retroactive Public Goods Funding rounds are designed and iterated on based on Citizen feedback

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- Feedback from high context stakeholders occurs informally, usually after designs are complete. Council Leads, top delegates, engaged Citizens, external teams, and/or RetroPGF recipients may be consulted on late stage drafts.

Phase 1: Community consulted design process

(Launching soon!)

- As we open source more of our design principles, process, and goals to the community we begin to build the shared context necessary to move into Phase 1.

- [ethDenver 2024 presentation](#)

- [The Collective DAO Archives](#)

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- In Phase 1, community feedback will be incorporated during

design process, not just after.

- Frequent polls on low context design parameters will be open to any community member's input.

- Higher context feedback will be requested from a Collective Feedback Panel. The Panel mostly formalizes what has to date been an informal process of collecting feedback from high context governance participants.

- About the Panel:

The Panel will include 10 highly engaged Citizens and 15 high context delegates, selected based on qualifying criteria and opt-in requirements, to be published at a later date. The Foundation will request input from the Panel on early design drafts requiring a high degree of context. Panel feedback will be shared with the Foundation and other panel members, but may eventually be viewable by the entire community via a read-only public channel. We will experiment with the Panel for an initial trial period, evaluating its efficacy like any other experiment, using the process outlined above. More details will be posted to the forum shortly.

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Phase 2: Community directed design process

- If continued, the Feedback Panel may evolve into a metaNERD contribution path, that would train and enable metaNERDs to design discrete components of the governance system. Imagine a bounty board of governance design components that can be completed by MetaNERDS.

Phase 3: Collaborative design process

- Finally, if successful, the metaNERD contribution path may evolve into a Core Delegate program.

- Core Delegates are our vision for the group of high context governance participants that maintain, contribute to, and evolve the core Optimism governance system, similar to Core Devs, which maintain, contribute to, and evolve the core protocol.

Meta Meta

Today is an exciting day for the Collective as we take the first steps towards a more open, and ultimately more collaborative, metagovernance design process.

As more of the Foundation's governance design thinking is shared with the community, the shared context necessary to move into Phase 1 is built. To that end, today we've open sourced several of our DAO design resources as additions to the Collective DAO Archives.

- [The Collective DAO Archives](#)

- [DAO Design Principles](#)

- [DAO Function Guidelines](#)

- Governance System Design Goals (to be open sourced at a later date!)

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As always, your feedback on all of the above is welcome below.