Onboarding handbook for the members of Governance Committee and other non-employee groups in OLS

This is an adaptation of an original work by the International Labour Office (ILO). Responsibility for the views and opinions expressed in the adaptation rests solely with the author or authors of the adaptation and are not endorsed by the ILO.

Adapted for OLS (previously Open Life Science) by Malvika Sharan, 2022

Foreword

Welcome to the OLS!

Participation in the OLS organisation is effective and meaningful only when our participants are provided equitable and supportive opportunities to add value to the OLS' work through representation, advocacy and diverse perspectives they bring from their communities. Strong, independent and representative members are essential for reaching our capacity building goals by applying open science skills, promoting open practices and creating a collaborative environment in which all members of our global community, and the local communities they represent, can thrive. *(Adapted from Deborah France-Massin, Director of the Bureau for Employers' Activities, International Labour Organization)*

To support the mission of OLS, the Board of Directors will approve and maintain the onboarding handbook for the new members of OLS Governance Committee and other key groups. The intent is to educate and continually guide its members to a high level of strategic success and achievement in accordance with best practices.

The handbook contains information and linked documents regarding relevant processes, policies, organisational structure and roles of the Governance Committee. **It serves as a resource for the members of Governance Committee and other formally constituted non-employee groups in OLS – referred to as "OLS key members" in this document** – in determining the manner in which business matters are to be conducted.

New members should be clear about what serving as a key member in OLS will involve. It is critical to good governance that OLS members understand existing policies and Code of Conduct, take steps to address conflicts of interest and apply the highest levels of integrity and ethics to ensure that matters before the OLS key members are looked at from multiple perspectives.

New members should be clear on how their role differs from those of managers and employees. As a key reference source, this handbook should be revisited over time to support your role as a new OLS key member on an equal footing with those who have been involved for a longer period.

Please email directors@openlifesci.org to ask any questions and give us any feedback on our ways of working as OLS key members.

How to use this handbook

First, read the **[definitions and abbreviation document](#)**. These are critical for making sense of the terms commonly used in governance and organisational management.

Second, take notes on the points that will help get you "up to speed" in your role as an OLS key member, referring back regularly to the handbook as you familiarise yourself with your new role.

Third, **review the guidance for onboarding from part 1 continuing to part 4** with checklists, ensuring that **you have access to information** and documents that have been provided for the work of the Governance Committee.

In the **part-1,** you will learn about different resources OLS has that offer information about the organisation. In the **part-2,** we give governance-related information shared across different documents – you are NOT required to read them all at the onboarding stage - i.e. before the kick off meeting. *For the inaugural cohort, we will breakdown the reading and review of these documents.*

In the **part-3,** of your onboarding, we ask you to please send details required to confirm your participation via the **Declaration of Participation form.** Please also send details required to record your current engagements across different projects via the **Declaration of Conflict of Interest form.** Check your access to different resources available to you in **part-4**.

Finally, in **part-5** we provide an offboarding process.

For the inaugural cohort, we especially encourage you to be objective and constructive about how we design and establish the processes that can be followed in the future by the Governance Committee*.*

If you are unsure, ask questions to your fellow OLS members. Remember, this is teamwork, and your fellow OLS members are happy to help you to get up to speed quickly to ensure that you have the opportunity to exchange skills, knowledge and experience with each other, and contribute to the sustainability of the organisation.

This handbook is a tool to facilitate an improved understanding of good governance, responsibilities and ways of working.

We hope that this document will help with your engagement as an OLS key member, providing present practices, information and resources to assist with the implementation of good practices in our organisation.

The contents of this handbook are based on legislative requirements and relevant better practices at the time of the preparation.

Governance resources

OLS is a non-profit organisation for open science training and capacity building. OLS community has engaged 400+ open science learners and practitioners from across the globe through its Open Seeds training and mentoring programme. OLS is committed to improve participation of marginalised and underrepresented communities in open science and research more broadly. The OLS Core team includes an Executive Director; three Co-Directors; two full time employees, and two Resident Fellows, working across different projects in varying capacities (see their specific roles). For any question, concern or additional details, please email team@openlifesci.org, or directly contact the Directors (directors@openlifesci.org).

In the process of formalising the OLS governance, we are drawing community leaders from the alumni network to form a Governance Committee. The composition of the Governance Committee will include individuals and representatives from the community and partnering organisations, ensuring representation of diverse technical expertise, individual experience and geographical perspectives.

Their onboarding begins after they have agreed to serve as a new OLS key member upon invitation by a core team member or a formal election process - and should be completed before the kick-off meeting.

Part 1

Important Contacts

- ☐ All Directors: directors@openlifesci.org
- ☐ Core Team email: team@openlifesci.org
- ☐ Governance committee mailing list: governance@openlifesci.org
- ☐ *Any other contact you might need? Please ask the team.*

Legal status

OLS is a non-profit charitable company limited by guarantee, based in the United Kingdom. http://data.companieshouse.gov.uk/doc/company/12824090

Code of Conduct

We are committed to fostering an open, safe and friendly environment by nurturing a welcoming, inclusive and collaborative community. We have a code of conduct that orient all activities in the OLS community, and people participating in OLS' activities must uphold OLS' code of conduct.

Scope: The Code of Conduct applies to all spaces related to OLS. This includes our email accounts, Slack, social networks, courses, workshops, discussions, meetings, our GitHub organisation and all its repositories and any other media that is part of OLS.

☐ It is important that all members treat each other with respect and listen to each other's views. Please read the **OLS Code of Conduct** in your first week as a Governance Committee member. **Code of Conduct link:** https://github.com/open-life-science/policies-procedures-and-docs/blob/main/CODE_OF_CONDUCT.md

For Your Reference: OLS Resources

To give you general ideas for where OLS resources are hosted, we recommend familiarising yourself with these key resources and public channels.

☐ Website: https://openlifesci.org/
☐ GitHub: https://github.com/open-life-science/
☐ Zenodo page: https://zenodo.org/communities/openlifesci
☐ YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/openlifesci
☐ Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/company/openlifesci

Optional Reading:

☐ OLS' current policies and procedure
☐ Reports per year:
    ☐ 2020: https://zenodo.org/record/4778472
    ☐ 2021: https://zenodo.org/record/5907922
    ☐ 2022: https://zenodo.org/record/7305243

Part 2

Reading the internal governance overview document

Mandatory Reading

All new Governance Committee members are required to read and acknowledge information shared in this part. As the inaugural cohort, you will be required to read the following information, which will be discussed in a committee meeting to ensure you have the chance to help improve them.

Documents to review: Six months goal

To understand the OLS organisational structure, Governance Committee's role and how they interface, we have created various resources detailing the Governance Procedure.

In 2023, the first Governance Committee will review these governance documents to help improve and inform the processes. These documents will aid their work in the committee going forward.

The responsibilities for review will be spread out, so that not all members review all the documents. However, they will review at least two (beside the mandatory document)

documents to lead the discussion during a full committee meeting. The committee members not listed as reviewers will be expected to raise any concern, propose solutions for improvement and when ready, they will approve the document as part of the governance resources.

Please indicate which resource you would like to review and lead the discussion on during a committee meeting.

Documents to develop: later stage

In the later stages, the inaugural committee will also help define the obligations and responsibilities of each individual participating in this Committee, different working groups or taskforces they'd like to lead or inform, and ways to act on OLS' priority areas in the current and the future iterations of the committee.

Part 3

Updating the internal governance document and website

To update your info in the internal governance document, please share:
- ☐ your title (optional), first and last name, preferred pronouns (optional)
- ☐ Contact detail (email, postal address - optional)
- ☐ telephone number (optional)
- ☐ Emergency contact details (name, first and last name, relationship)

For the website, please share:
- ☐ a short bio
- ☐ a current profile image (optional by emailing team@openlifesci.org)

Send all of these via the **Declaration of Participation** (Google Form).

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

After they have agreed to join the OLS governance or other key groups, invited/elected members must identify and sign the **Declaration of Conflict of Interest** (Google Form).

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a key member (or one of their relatives) has a private or personal interest, directly or indirectly, that (potentially) influences or appears to influence the objective exercise of their duties as a key member, to the detriment or benefit of the organisation. An actual conflict is when a key member faces a real and existing conflict of interest; a potential conflict is a conflict of interest that does not exist yet but may occur; and perceived conflict is when a key member appears to have a conflict of interest, even if this is not the case. A conflict of interest here doesn't necessarily have negative connotation, and should not be confused with 'conflicting interest' (later meaning two or more interests that are incompatible or cannot be reconciled). This declaration will improve our awareness as you participate in the

committee and bring alignments. Serving as a Governance Committee member should not end up harming your role in other places and vice versa, and in some cases can be used for benefitting shared positive goals for all parties involved.

Part 4

Checklist to grant to access

- ☐ Mailing list with @openlifesci.org domain
    - ☐ We will use the email you shared in the internal governance document
    - ☐ All documents and discussions for your work will go to your email address so do keep a regular eye on it.

- ☐ Shared calendar
    - ☐ OLS public calendar: https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0?cid=b3BlbmxpZmVzY2lAZ21ha WwuY29t
    - ☐ OLS meetings relevant for your role are added to the shared calendar: [ADD LINK]

- ☐ Shared Google Drive and all files related to the current and future engagements around your roles, responsibilities and ongoing work which include but not limited to the
    - ☐ Governance documentation
    - ☐ Meeting notes
    - ☐ Policies and guidance
    - ☐ Reports and strategy document relevant for the Governance Committee
    - ☐ Status update on the Board's work
    - ☐ Status update on the Committee's work
    - ☐ Roadmap and milestones

- ☐ GitHub repositories
    - ☐ Familiarise yourself with all the relevant GitHub repositories on the OLS organisation: https://github.com/open-life-science/
    - ☐ You should be invited as a writer or with another access level as appropriate for your role

- ☐ Slack workspace and the private channels relevant for the role of OLS key members
    - ☐ You should be added to the general workspace (all open channels will be accessible)
    - ☐ The private channel should be used for informal discussions, with no expectation that all members will read it.

☐ You can use Slack direct messaging if you need a quick reply to an informal question.

☐ Please send an email to formally record and share any conversation that all members of your team should be aware of.

☐ Keybase.io for password sharing if needed

Part 5

Other resources that are useful for the OLS key members

You can share anonymous feedback anytime with the OLS Core Team. Offboarding process for the OLS key members can be requested before the office term concludes:

☐ Anonymous feedback can be submitted anytime via this form: https://forms.gle/1Gxk5rurKbnew4N67 (accessible to the OLS Core Team only)

☐ Offboarding process **(*see working document*)**

Other Recommended Reading for Trustee roles that may align with the OLS Key member roles

☐ The essential trust: six main duties

☐ The Essential Trustee: What you need to know, what you need to do

☐ NCVO Board Basics