

BGC Community Trustee Selection Proposal

April 15, 2021

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Background

In conjunction with its decision to expand in size, the Board has decided to adopt a new process for the selection of community- and affiliate-selected trustees. [The Board's goals](#) are for the new process to improve upon the old election process in three key areas:

- Selecting candidates who *represent the full diversity of the Wikimedia movement*, rather than favoring candidates from the largest language communities and from North America and Europe;
- Selecting candidates who have the *skills and experience to perform well* on the Board of a complex global organization, in addition to their community expertise; and

- *Reducing the burden of candidacy*, in order to encourage a wider and more diverse range of candidates to run.

The Board discussed several ideas for how to achieve these goals, including using a Selection Committee for an indirect election process, implementing quotas, adding an additional candidate vetting step, and using a different voting system. The Board requested community input on these ideas in [an extensive call for feedback](#) from February 1 through March 14.

The call for feedback resulted in a wide range of responses, with the following considerations [emerging as the most important](#) among the community members who participated:

- The new process should be welcoming and accessible to communities who have felt excluded by the previous election process;
- The Board should strive to hold the selection process as soon as possible;
- Geographic/regional representation and gender are the most important axes of diversity; and
- Community members must continue to directly vote for candidates.

[The facilitation team's report to the Board](#) contains a more comprehensive summary of the community feedback.

Proposal

Summary

The proposed selection process proceeds as follows:

1. The Board drafts a call for candidates that includes details about the skills and experience that are currently represented on the Board (excluding trustees whose terms are expiring) and that the Board would like the selected trustees to have.
2. The Foundation devotes resources to informing communities of the trustee selection process and encouraging people from emerging and underrepresented communities to run as candidates.
3. As part of their self-nomination process, candidates fill out the trustee evaluation form.
4. The Foundation continues to devote resources to inviting communities to participate in the selection process by engaging candidates during the campaign period and by voting.
5. Community members vote and their votes are counted using a proportional voting system chosen by the Elections Committee.

6. The Foundation conducts the usual vetting of the selected candidates (background check and communications review).
7. The Board appoints the selected candidates for whom the vetting process did not reveal any significant issues.

This proposal does not suggest implementing quotas or hard requirements for candidate skills or experience for the 2021 round of community trustee selection. Instead, it relies on the more detailed information from the Board in the call for feedback, the community outreach efforts, and the proportional voting system to meet the Board's needs in terms of skills and diversity. However, it also contemplates potentially adding or changing elements to the process for future rounds of trustee selection, based on an assessment of the effectiveness this first time.

Timeline

April 15:	Board meets to consider and approve this proposal
April - May:	Elections Committee and staff plan the details of the selection process *
June 1-2:	Board meets and approves the call for candidates
June 8 - 29:	Call for candidates; candidate outreach
June 29 - July 20:	Candidates campaign and answer questions; community outreach
July 20 - August 3:	Voting; community outreach
August 3 - 10:	Vote counting and processing
August 10 - 24:	Foundation vetting of selected candidates
August / September:	Board appoints selected candidates

* If the Elections Committee, in consultation with staff, determines that this timeline does not provide adequate time for the technical implementation of a satisfactory voting system, they may request from the Board a delay of this timeline by up to three months. Having a good, proportional voting system in place is an essential component of how this proposal attempts to promote Board diversity.

Details

Resources for Candidate and Voter Outreach

Similar to the outreach efforts used for the call for feedback itself, the Foundation will devote resources to connecting with as many Wikimedia communities as possible to encourage them to engage in the trustee selection process. This outreach will also involve encouraging contributors to consider and assess themselves as potential candidates. [Community feedback](#) confirmed the prior assessments by the Board, the Elections Committee, and Foundation staff, that dedicated outreach is necessary to expand and diversify the trustee candidate pool beyond

the “usual suspects” and to expand the pool of voters beyond community members who actively follow and participate in discussions on Meta-Wiki and wikimedia-l. Many emerging communities said that the call for feedback was the first time they had been asked their opinion, particularly on a Board or governance topic. The selection process itself should continue that inclusion and invitation to participate, including providing translation services to enable community members to participate in their local languages.

The details of these outreach efforts will be determined by Foundation staff, in consultation with the Elections Committee and with the advice of the Community Affairs Committee.

Candidate Skills and the Trustee Evaluation Form

In the call for candidates, the Board will explain the skills and experience that it hopes the selected trustees will have.¹ Accompanying this statement, the Board will explain the skills and experience that the current trustees have (not including trustees whose seats are to be filled by the selection process). The Board will also list the skills and experience that it is hoping the new Board-selected trustees will have.

Candidates will be required to fill out the [trustee evaluation form](#) as part of their declaration of candidacy, and will be required to elaborate on the points raised in the form. In approving the form, the Board communicated the criteria that are most important to consider for trustee candidates. The form is a tool to evaluate and compare candidates’ qualifications, and a prompt for voters to consider the full range of qualities that are needed in the Board.

For the 2021 round of trustee selection, the trustee evaluation form will not be used to disqualify any particular candidates, and the Board will not set any hard requirements for particular skills or experience (such as contemplated in [the “Specialization Seats” idea](#)). Community feedback related to the [call for types of skills and experience](#) and [vetting of candidates](#) was divided, with some strongly-expressed sentiment that the responsibility for evaluating candidates should fall to the community members who are voting for them.

Through the call for candidates, the use of the trustee evaluation form, and the dedication of resources for candidate outreach, the Board will do all it can to provide community voters with the information they need to make informed decisions. Following the 2021 round of trustee selection, the Board will evaluate whether the process used was successful in selecting candidates with the skills and experience that the Board needs. Based on that assessment, the

¹ At the BGC’s recommendation, this is expected to include a request for regional knowledge, which will be developed in the Call for Candidates in partnership with the Elections Committee for final Board vote in the June 1st and 2nd meeting. In particular, the Elections Committee should propose sensible, transparent and data-driven measures for the candidate’s home country background in terms of economic development, human rights, as well as the state of democracy.

Board may make adjustments to the process for future rounds of trustee selection, including potentially implementing hard requirements for particular skills or minimum qualifications.

Proportional Voting System

The Board's goal for the voting system is that it is [proportional](#), with features that help to prevent the preferences of smaller communities from being drowned out by the preferences of larger communities. The exact voting method to be used should be determined by the Elections Committee. The Elections Committee has access to the [community](#) and Board input about the voting system, and is best equipped to consider the details of different options.

The Elections Committee, the Product department, and the Legal department are already in communication about the needs for technical implementation of any new voting system. It is possible that the most-desired voting system could not be implemented in time for this trustee selection cycle, in which case the stakeholders can find some method that improves upon the old version for at least this year.

Seat Distribution

There are six seats to potentially be filled in the 2021 round of trustee selection. Three of these seats are ones that were originally meant to be filled in 2020. In order to obtain a better, though not optimal, distribution of the eight community- and affiliate-selected Board seats across three years (4/4/0), the 2021 process will only be used to select four trustees. The other two open seats will be filled in 2022 alongside the other two community- and affiliate-selected trustee terms that are set to expire that year.

No Quotas in 2021 but Possibly in 2022 or Future Selections

No quotas will be imposed for the 2021 round of trustee selection, but the Board may add them to subsequent rounds of trustee selection if they are necessary to achieve the diversity the Board requires. The Board will primarily focus on regional representation and gender in considering candidate/Board diversity.

Community feedback² has underscored the complexities involved regarding the idea of quotas. Getting quotas right requires more careful consideration, including perhaps an additional community conversation dedicated solely to the topic of quotas.

Quotas would not be the only element of the trustee selection process designed to encourage and improve Board diversity. The use of a proportional voting system and the dedication of resources to candidate and voter outreach should help in these regards, and the Board will

² This includes both [the feedback on the "Quotas" idea](#) and [the feedback on the "Regional Seats" idea](#).

make its goals and needs related to diversity clear in the call for candidates and other statements and communications. It is possible that those measures will be sufficient, making the addition of quotas unnecessary. Following the 2021 community trustee selection process, the Board will assess the results of the process and gather feedback from participants in order to assess whether to implement quotas or something similar to them in the future.

No Selection Committee

In general, community feedback was [opposed to the creation of a Selection Committee](#), and to [indirect trustee selection more broadly](#). As the effectiveness of such a committee would rely on community trust in the committee to operate on their behalf, the lack of support makes the Selection Committee idea inadvisable.

Assessment and Refinement

This proposal tries to appropriately consider and account for Board goals, community priorities, and logistical limitations. It may not get the balance exactly correct. It is impossible to achieve perfection in planning a complex process such as this, and we do not have unlimited time for further conversations and refinement. Once we have put this process into practice to select trustees, we will have much more information about its strengths and weaknesses. Following the completion of the 2021 community trustee selection process, the Board will evaluate whether the results met its needs and the Foundation will seek feedback from community members. The Board and the Elections Committee will consider these assessments, and what changes to the process might be necessary to address any shortcomings they identify.

Resolution

Title: Approving the 2021 Selection Process for Community Board Seats

Whereas, the Board of Trustees has six community- and affiliate-selected seats to fill in 2021;

Whereas, the Board has committed to developing a new process for filling those seats;

Whereas, the Foundation conducted a six-week call for community feedback about various ideas and possibilities for the new selection process; and

Whereas, taking into account the community feedback and the Board's governance needs, the Board Governance Committee has developed a proposed selection process;

Now, therefore, it is:

RESOLVED, that the Board approves the proposed selection process for the 2021 round of selecting community- and affiliate-selected Trustees.

References

- [Resolution:Board Expansion 2020](#) (February 13, 2020)
- [Resolution:Amended Bylaws Articles IV & V](#) (December 9, 2020)
- [Resolution:Approving Trustee Selection Proposals for Community Discussion](#) (January 8, 2021)
- [Call for feedback: Community Board seats](#) (February - March, 2021)
- Board Governance Committee Community Trustee Selection Proposal