[CC] A fresh take on mature open source cooperation"

Amsterdam, 2015.09.30

Michiel Leenaars
Director of Strategy, NLnet

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Funding the shock waves of open information technology

Short introduction

- *a charity "to promote the exchange of electronic information and all that is related or beneficial to that purpose".*

- In 1982 network pioneer Teus Hagen started the EUnet together with Peter Collinson and Keld Simonsen.

The charity

- Seed funding from the proceeds of a substantial capital created in 1997 by the sale of NLnet Holding BV to US-based UUnet (now: Verizon).

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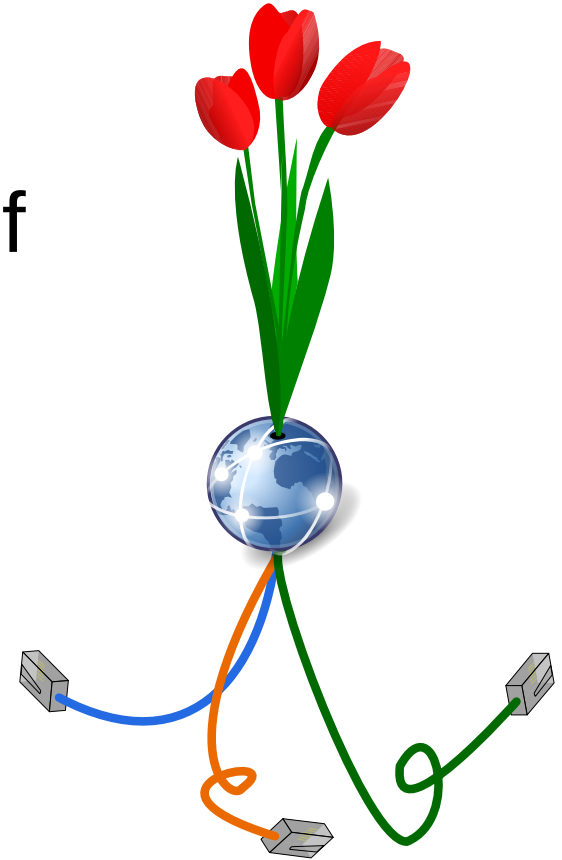
Our 'weapon of choice'

- A world wide open competitive call for microgrants facilitating independent contributions to internet technology and internet standards, based on open source

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Some examples

NLnet Labs	ARPA2
TOR hidden services	SSL Observatory
GNUnet	Nodewatcher
OpenBTS	Jitsi
Unhosted	Fairwaves
NoScript	UmTRX
KSplice	6bed4
Serval	Binary Analysis Tool
Nat64	WebODF
Koruza	Uberflow
Floss manuals	Sylkserver
…	…
…	…

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Scaling projects up is hard

- An 'embedded' open source project with a closely knit group of collaborators doesn't always turn into a comprehensive, cooperative program supported by a lively ecosystem?

(but at some point the project has to enter the post-project stage)

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Project stage | Program stage

- predefined lifetime

- ad hoc involvement

- 'pioneering'

    – experimental/pilot

- meet short term needs

    – feature development

    – work in progress

- open ended

- open community

- 'proven technology'

    – production usage

- long term needs

    – solidifying technology

    – software engineering

    – security hardening

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One Foundation per Project

- Some serious overhead and responsibility

  - legal/administrative

  - organisational

  - financial

- Steep learning curve for people involved, on top of the project responsibilities

- Easy to make mistakes

This got us thinking

- What are the real 'complications'?
  - People don't easily trust each other with money
    - And donations can be very difficult to put in the books of most existing organisation
  - Legal requirements
    - getting a bank account to pool money
    - means going to a notary to start a legal entity
    - means filing quarterly tax statements
    - and that is just the start

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[The Commons Conservancy]

- An 'organisation hypervisor' that can spawn and support virtual open source foundations

- Each Program runs independently from all the others, in perfect isolation

- Each Program determines its own operating environment (such as bylaws) with templates provided, and has full connectivity to the outside (own site, etc)

What about money?

- Donations handled completely externally through dedicated fund, e.g. NLnet

    - no money = no risk of financial contamination

    - every Program profits from charitable tax recognition for donations from day one

    - audited, professional financial environment

    - open mechanism invites fresh blood

Flexible pooling

- No 'end of budget year' syndrome
    - money stays in place, like a Swiss bank account
    - donations can have a multi-year release span
- Donations can come from anyone with an interest in the technology and its goals

    (public, private, academic, civil society, ..)

- Only achieved results are paid out

Stewardship

- [The Commons Conservancy] is a safe place for contributors to keep source code + other assets – if so desired

- Program may decide to add another license on top of an existing license

    - newer version of the current license

    - merging with another free software/open source project with an incompatible license
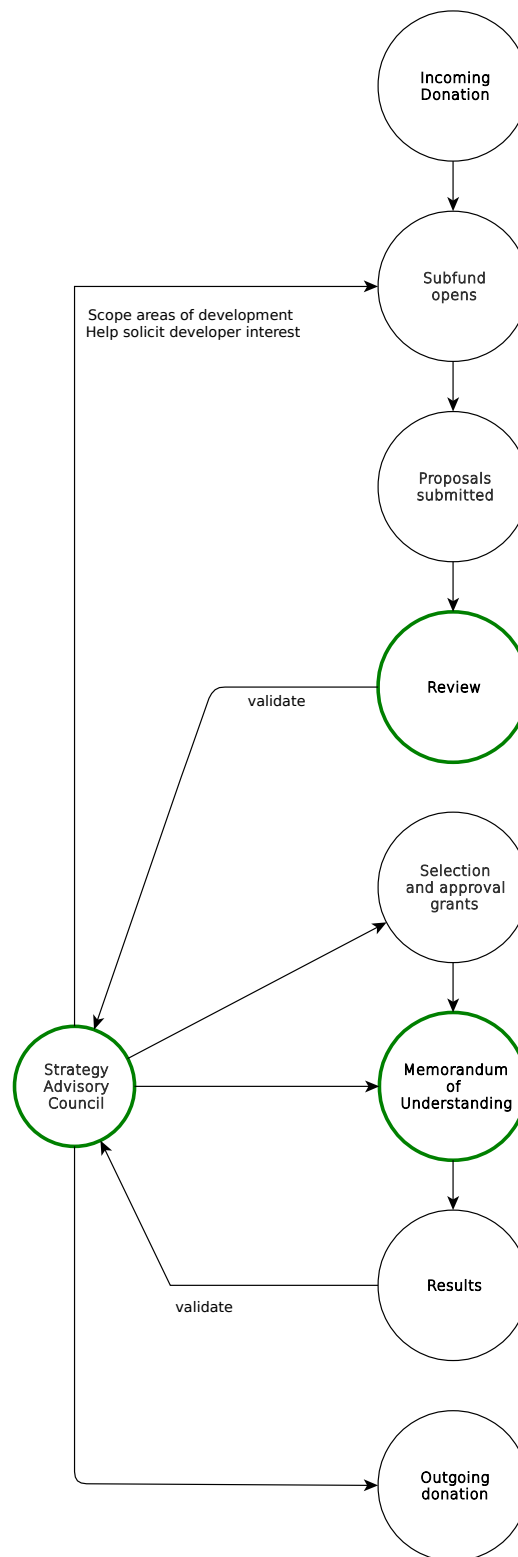
Terms of reference

- Open to anyone acting in the public interest.

- Constructive, positive and inclusive approach

- License agnostic.

    – Limited to Free Software/Open source efforts without commercial provisions

- No lock in

    – A Program is free to go at all times to upgrade and run its own 'bare metal' organisation.

(continued)

- Every Program appoints an entry point for Responsible Disclosure handling

- No sketchy stuff

- That is it, really.

Questions

- Is there anything GEANT would like to see included in the terms?

    – Interface accessibility?