

ONet Initiative on Governance

Section to be completed by the initiative lead.

Title of Initiative	Governance
Lead¹	Maja Leonie Metzger and Whitney Fleming
Start of Initiative²	On 01.05.2025
Submission of 1st Progress report³	By 30.06.2025

Summary of Initiative

Rationale

The challenge, opportunity, or gap that this initiative addresses, relevant to ONet's role in engaging stakeholders in IPBES processes. Please be as specific as possible.

ONet's strength lies in the diversity and dedication of its members, but its internal governance has remained underdeveloped. Without a clear, shared approach to decision-making and accountability, it's harder to coordinate, sustain trust, or grow. We aim to shape a system that fits a volunteer-driven, globally diverse community that is inclusive, flexible, and equipped to manage change. Through community consultation, reviewing best-practices and careful reflection, we will co-develop a new approach on how ONet can govern itself with clarity and legitimacy.

Vision

What success looks like: the intended impact or outcome for stakeholders and/or IPBES.

A shared framework that reflects how ONet actually works and how it wants to work. One that supports active participation without burdening volunteers, gives clarity without rigid hierarchy, and builds trust through transparency. Success means a governance approach that helps stakeholders connect, contribute, and collaborate more easily - enabling the network to grow, adapt, and stay true to its values while deepening its engagement across the IPBES process.

Expected Outputs

Tangible deliverables (e.g., reports, events, tools, outreach materials).

¹ If an initiative has co-leads, their tasks must be clearly assigned in the concept note.

² Initiatives start on the first of a month to support subsequent reporting. They may be backdated.

³ The 1st progress report needs to be submitted by the end of the 2nd month of the initiative.

An academic publication that explores how stakeholder networks like ONet can govern themselves - rooted in best practices, community insights, and lessons from ONet's own evolution. This research sets the foundation for implementing a new governance framework: one that updates internal roles, clarifies responsibilities, and strengthens coordination and engagement across the network. A practical guide will make the new structure accessible to all members. An ONet Caucus will be hosted to discuss the new ONet governance framework and practical guide in an accessible way among the ONet community. The process will also explore legal options to support ONet's future, and help ensure that its governance is not only clear and functional, but trusted and ready to grow.

Alignment with ONet Values and IPBES

How this initiative reflects ONet's mission of inclusive stakeholder engagement and supports IPBES's objectives. Please refer to the [IPBES Objectives](#) and [ONet Terms of Reference](#) as appropriate.

This initiative puts ONet's underlying commitments into action: inclusivity, transparency, and co-production. By involving stakeholders from across regions, disciplines, and backgrounds in shaping and implementing governance, it honours ONet's commitment to self-organization and open participation (ONet ToR). The initiative contributes to IPBES Objectives 2 and 5: building capacity for stakeholder engagement, and strengthening communication and engagement with all actors (IPBES/7/1). A well-functioning governance system helps ONet facilitate engagement across the IPBES work programme, connect contributors and end users (IPBES/3/18), and mobilize in-kind contributions more effectively. Clearer governance makes space for more voices, more action, and stronger support for the Platform's deliverables. This initiative strengthens an inclusive, collaborative science-policy interface.

Activities

Roadmap

Milestones and timeline (initiatives start on the first of a month).

By 08/2025: Complete research, focus groups and internal analysis of key themes for governance.

By 09/2025: Analyse and synthesise focus group results. Identify key lessons and priorities for governance. Draft the new framework and practical guide based on findings. Prepare for consultation and feedback across the network.

By 10/2025: Circulate draft governance framework and practical guide for review within the facilitation team and broader network. Host a ONet Caucus event to introduce and discuss the new governance framework. Revise and finalize governance framework and practical guide as needed based on internal review and caucus.

By 11/2025: Submit academic article on stakeholder network governance, based on the initiative's process and findings.

By 12/2025: Finalise and begin implementing the updated governance structure, including any necessary updates to ONet's Terms of Reference.

Within 2025: Explore legal structuring options to support ONet's long-term governance and resourcing in collaboration with relevant ONet initiatives.

Resources and Collaboration

Specific resources from ONet or external partners in support of this initiative. This includes collaborations with other ONet initiatives. Examples include technical advice, tools, promotions or networking.

This initiative will draw on ONet's internal records, past governance documents, and the experiences of former facilitators. It will collaborate with the digital infrastructure initiative to ensure the new governance framework is supported by the right tools and platforms. It will also link with the membership initiative to ensure governance structures reflect the diversity, needs, and realities of ONet's growing community. The academic component is supported by Bangor University, providing research ethics oversight, qualitative expertise, and secure infrastructure for data handling. Focus groups and consultations will be coordinated using existing ONet channels, including the newsletter, mailing list, and web space. The initiative may also engage with legal experts and partner organizations to explore structural options for long-term support.

While closely collaborating on the overall process, Whitney is leading on the research aspects (academic publication, related events) and Maja on the implementation aspects (new ONet governance framework, practical guide, ONet Caucus on ONet governance, legal options).

- ☒ We confirm that we lead this initiative and am responsible for its implementation.
- ☒ We confirm that this initiative has been reviewed by two members of the facilitation team and that we have updated it accordingly.
Our three reviewers were Michael Ruggeri, Nita Shashidharan and Laure Denos.
- ☒ We confirm that we are submitting a progress report by the end of every second month beginning from the start of the initiative to onet.ipbes@gmail.com. If progress reports are not sent on time, steps for escalation and potential archiving apply, per ONet guidelines.

29.04.2025, Maja Leonie Metzger
Date and name and of the initiative lead⁴

30.04.2025, Whitney Fleming
Date and name and of the initiative lead⁵

⁴ Typing the name accounts as signing this document. Initiative leads can additionally express the interest to add their signature on the PDF via e-mail to onet.ipbes@gmail.com.

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Section to be completed by the ONet facilitator.

This initiative was presented and approved by the ONet facilitation team in the ONet special approval session on 30.04.2025.

30.04.2025, Franziska Fischer Franziska Fischer
Date and name of the assigned ONet facilitator⁶

⁶ Typing the name accounts as signing this document. Facilitators can additionally express the interest to add their signature on the PDF via e-mail to onet.ipbes@gmail.com.