

Alternative Contribution Models for Sakai

Challenge:

Currently there are not enough clear and well known methods for members to both contribute valuable resources (time, money, staffing and expertise) and ensure that these resources are allocated by the foundation to activities that the member finds most valuable. This is especially noticeable for members who want to make small to moderate contributions and don't want to lead development efforts or major projects.

In summary some institutions may feel trapped between needing some work accomplished to enable adoption or success and the current Sakai aesthetic of "Well get in there, volunteer, and get it done".

Desired Outcome(s): Develop a community proposal on how the Sakai Foundation might foster additional types of member contributions that honor member needs and priorities, allow for contributions in many forms and sizes and foster both community building and overall directions.

Guiding Principles: Any proposal(s) should conform to the following general principles to ensure they are both palatable and practical:

1. These member contributions will likely be earmarked for a specific purpose (i.e. effecting a specific feature or tool) and will likely have firm timeframes desired (i.e. needed by Fall '06).
2. The proposal and methods should remain silent as to how the board chooses to make use of the contribution (in source, out source, etc.) only that acceptance of the contribution forms an informal "contract".
3. Contributions may be from single entities or a pooled/consortial effort (e.g. three institutions contribute \$50k to ensure goal management tools are delivered by January 2007).
4. The contribution process and decision should be both transparent (no hidden conditions or agreements) and visible (as a minimum to all members and affiliates).
5. Contributions may be ear-marked to build entirely new features/tools or simply to accelerate an existing "requirement" that does not yet have resources committed or a firm timeline.
6. All requests will be vetted to ensure that they fit within current and predicted architecture and do not explicitly force code forks.

Examples:

- a. School A and School B both want to accelerate the development of the Sakai image tool(s) currently being developed by School C & School D. They jointly develop a list of requirements and deliverables. Neither school wants to lead the project or informally donate programmer time. They are willing to contribute \$20k/year for two years.
- b. There are 10 schools who want to begin to use Sakai on campus but the current stumbling block is the lack of a simple, robust and reliable tool to help them migrate content from their current proprietary system in Sakai. None of the

- schools individually can undertake this effort but they are each willing to contribute \$5k to consortially ensure a tool is built.
- c. There are 5 organizations each able to contribute varying funds totaling \$200K/yr. for two years for further development of the OSP tools. The Foundation helps the schools coordinate the use of funds to add a developer and designer to the existing development team.
 - d. Several schools indicate a pressing need for a specific central position to accomplish key core activities (e.g. QA or documentation) that the foundation currently can not afford to fund. The foundation puts out a call that results in some number of schools voluntarily contributing funding to fill a position.

Questions to be pondered/discussed:

1. Do we need alternative methods for contributions at all? If we're satisfied that everyone can find a way to contribute or get their needs met why bother with all this?
2. Does this somehow lessen the "purity" of open or community source? After all we have people and institutions who are already contributing and we recently had a thorough process to capture and prioritize requirements.
3. Shouldn't we just encourage members to contribute their resources to the discretion of the E.D. or Board? Why not just raise the "dues" for everyone if we want to accelerate contributions? How about offering levels of membership where some pay more to have more say?
4. Can we make something like this work? Sounds very complex and difficult to manage...