

# Accountable Now Verein General Meeting

## 27 March 2024 Minutes

### **Present**

Rachel Smith (Chair of the Board), Independent  
Alex Sardar, Independent (partial)  
Jo Thompson, Independent  
Vanessa Goas, Independent  
Babacar Ndong, Educo  
Tamryn Lee-Fourie, Civicus

### **Observer:**

Cheri-Leigh Erasmus, Accountability Lab

### **With apologies:**

Mary Brezovich, SOS Children's Villages International  
Veronica Zambrano, Plan International  
Jean Scrimgeour, Accountability Lab

### **In attendance from the Secretariat**

Megan Colnar, Executive Director

### **Welcome and Board matters (ACC 24/01)**

- The Chair thanked everyone for joining the meeting and acknowledged that we had the necessary quorum to begin the meeting and to make the necessary decisions. However, during the meeting, we lost quorum towards the end of the meeting, so some matters were taken to virtual voting.<sup>1</sup>
- The Chair pointed out that the agenda has covered everything that needs to be discussed during the meeting especially the current financial realities and the future of AN and she specifically thanked Megan and her team for excellent board papers
- No observations or corrections from the previous minutes, hence, the 16 November 2023 minutes was officially approved (**5 in favor, 0 opposed**)
- The Chair shared that Tim Boyes-Watson, Independent board member who joined the board last year has stepped down due to personal reasons. Vanessa Goas, who has been appointed as the Acting Treasurer after Tim's departure, was officially confirmed as Treasurer via a virtual vote (**8 in favor, 0 opposed**) on 18th -22nd April, 2024.

### **Updates from ED(ACC 24/02)**

The Executive director shared an update on several successes AN experiencing an increase in positive sentiment with improved member satisfaction across the board, both prospective and current members having strong interest in new membership tiers, events, and offerings. AN is also seeing an increased demand for our expertise from new organizations, networks, and

---

<sup>1</sup> During the meeting, we had one board member join a little late and another board member had to leave early due to illness. Follow up votes were conducted virtually with the full board where necessary. Accountability Lab's Co-CEO offered advice and reflection, but did not formally vote.

fundraising. Despite these successes, AN continues to confront a difficult financial situation both directly and as a result of major shifts in funding patterns in the sector.

The ED emphasized that AN's existing revenue model (which is wholly dependent on membership fees) is no longer viable for the organization; a point underscored by the reality of several members facing deficits and an inability to pay this year (despite wanting to stay in the network). Overall, membership revenue is projected to fall short by 45k, forcing a shift towards other revenue models like contracts and grants. The ED emphasized that a healthier mix of revenue moving forward is essential to the sustainability of the organization. The ED noted that AN's current project with Humanity United on launching a new fund for social movements is a perfect example of how AN can bring its assets and expertise to mission-driven dynamic accountability projects. Enabling the organization to take on new types of revenue means rethinking its staffing and operations too, which the ED noted is part of the work of the ongoing strategic framework refresh. Deciding how to transition to new ways of working and supporting members, while honoring and supporting 2024 members remains top priority. The board expressed interest in understanding how a new framework for AN's work will mean reshaping staffing and approach.

Unofficial figures were presented for FY 2023, where AN has a deficit of at least 75,000 euros, which was all covered by organizational reserves and savings. Final figures will be shared in the June board meeting. The ED noted dissatisfaction and skepticism with their German tax advisors, but shared that it would be difficult to make a switch in the middle of the wind down of operations in Germany. She also shared that any perceived savings from Q1 are actually deferred costs and will likely hit the budget in Q2 (including taxes, financial filings, and audits). She emphasized how difficult and unmanageable navigating German bureaucracy around financial requirements and the continued appearance of unexpected costs related to these. The board concluded that AN should hire a German-speaking consultant based in Germany to help be a better liaison and supervisor to these obligations. Because AN's books will undergo audit via Accountability Lab (as part of the current fiscal host arrangement) in the United States, the board agreed to forgo the optional audit in Germany due to its expense and complications. The 2022 audit, delayed by last year's tax filings for 2021, is nearly concluded and no issues have emerged.

### **Future of AN(ACC 24/03)**

Given the current financial projections and status of the field, board members took extensive time to discuss scenarios and near-term decisions for AN's future. Discussions were centered around core funding pursuit, mixed contracting, and the lingering potential of an overall wind-down, if the funding picture doesn't improve. While the board noted the real risks of AN's current financial position, they agreed to hold off on an existential discussion about the organization's future until the September board meeting, when it's expected some of AN's current funding and new member opportunities will be clearer. They asked the ED to develop additional information on potential scenarios for AN, if revenue targets aren't met by September. They also asked for the ED to attempt to trim the budget, or hold off on big spending, if possible, recognizing that the budget is already tight.

The board suggested other measures to help focus on fundraising and revenue generation in this current moment, like setting a minimum amount for pursuing grants and contract opportunities and deprioritizing new members to identify financial opportunities. The board also conveyed their support to bring in some additional fundraising support in Q2. The board also

suggested that AN pause seeking registration in the US in order to deal with its heavy operational obligations in Germany in the first two quarters (and return to US registration later in the year). Other suggestions are on fundraising contracting like partnering with local CSOs to help them get contracts that could bolster their revenue.

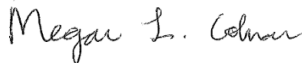
The board also took time to discuss staff burnout and overwork, a considerable risk for the organization with such a small team. The ED emphasized that continuing to rely on overextending current staff was not viable. Using a mix of additional operations support in Germany, additional fundraising support, and fellows and interns, the board hopes to alleviate some of the strain on staff. Immediate plans were made to support existing staff to take breaks and reprioritize work plans to focus on essentials.

The board voted virtually to approve AN's new membership policy, which restates our members' rights and obligations including across the new member tiers (**8 in favor, 0 opposed**) on 18th -22nd April, 2024.

**Executive Session ([ACC 24/04](#))**

The meeting closed with an executive session for the board members without AN staff to make final decisions on the US registration, Pausing the 2023 audit, additional support staff

The next meeting will take place virtually on June 14 2024



Megan Colnar  
Executive Director



Rachel Smith  
Chair of the Board

**END**