

# Accountable Now Verein General Meeting

## 14 June 2024 Minutes

### **Present**

Rachel Smith (Chair of the Board), Independent  
Jean Scrimgeour, Accountability Lab  
Babacar Ndong, Educo  
Tamryn Lee-Fourie, Civicus  
Mary Brezovich, SOS Children's Villages International  
Veronica Zambrano, Plan International

### **With apologies:**

Jo Thompson, Independent  
Vanessa Goas, Independent  
Alex Sardar, Independent (partial)

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

Megan Colnar, Executive Director

### **Welcome and Board matters ([ACC 24/05](#))**

- The Chair confirmed the necessary quorum to begin the meeting and take any board actions; the meeting's agenda was also confirmed with the addition of a discussion around simplifying board recruitment and onboarding.
- No observations or corrections from the previous minutes, hence, the March 27 2024 minutes was officially approved (**6 Approved 0 opposed**)
- The Chair shared that Jo Thompson, Independent board member who joined the board five years ago is stepping off the board effective this June meeting. Other expected board transitions are expected before the end of the year due to term limits and members departing the network.

### **Updates from ED([ACC 24/06](#))**

The Executive director (ED) shared updates on finance & fundraising, partnerships & opportunities, membership recruitment, and operations & staffing. She noted that there have been improvements in all areas and that the organization is in a stronger financial position compared to a few months ago, with a robust pipeline of funding opportunities. On Finance & Fundraising; Just recently Accountable now has secured Packard Learning Partnership contract worth at least \$125K USD for 18 months, and received a \$30K extension from Humanity United (HU) contract through July 2024, likewise, many member fees who were on hold initially have come in. A new member, OGP, also joined AN. The updated budget projections were reviewed and endorsed by the FRC.

The ED highlighted opportunities in the fundraising pipeline including grants, contracts, and new partnerships. She also highlighted a renewed approach for partnering with Global Standard Partners, including leveraging their skills, knowledge, and expertise for regional trainings/resources. The staff are also undertaking additional efforts to support new member

recruitment like collecting testimonials, revamping brochures, content in new languages, and more.

The ED also provided updates on AN's core team, ongoing partnerships with consultants and other contractors, and the search for a contractor to support the operational wind down of activities in Germany. Operationally, AN is in the process of moving all contracts to the US entity, fiscally hosted by Accountability Lab.

### **Discussions ([ACC 24/06](#))**

Board members were excited about the recent development and positive change in the finances of the organization, and concluded that the organization is no longer in immediate financial distress ("out of the sea") and should therefore focus on future planning rather than survival. They advocated for shifting from a crisis mode to long-term strategic planning, focusing on building a robust organization. At the same time, the board noted the importance of finding a balance between saving for future uncertainties and investing in current needs to avoid staff burnout and ensure organizational sustainability. The board stressed the need to balance current workload and capacity to ensure high-quality delivery, particularly with new projects, which raises concerns about team burnout and the importance of maintaining a balance between new projects and core membership work. The ED highlighted the organization's use of contractors to manage workload and undertake leadership of key initiatives and projects.

The board emphasized the need for the organization to agree on a comfortable financial threshold for reserves and fundraising (either a specific number or percentage of future funding) to ensure sustainability and to avoid repeating the questions and uncertainties around difficult financial years unnecessarily, which impact staff morale and ability to engage in future planning. They noted differences in risk tolerance among board members, ranging from wanting 100% of next year's funding secured by October to being comfortable with 30%, so an official threshold would help these different opinions converge around a single agreement. They thereby charge the finance and risk committee to determine a specific threshold and make a recommendation to the board. **(Action)** The board also suggested that financial planning for next year start as soon as possible.

The board also discussed the formalities of finalizing and adopting the 2022 audited accounts and presenting the 2023 unaudited figures during the AGM. The ED provides details about the 2023 budget, noting a likely deficit but with sufficient reserves to cover it. The ED also provided background on the draft strategic framework and plan for member discussions and engagement, and the board indicated an endorsement of the current framework and plan to refine it with members.

### **New Strategic Framework ([ACC 24/07](#))**

The ED presented the draft of AN's new strategic framework, She underlined the need for input and refinement of the draft, which is set to be presented at the AGM for member feedback and adoption by September. The framework aims to define the organization's identity, operations, key stakeholders, and niche. The strategy development has involved meetings with experts and members, including IRP, members and Global Standard Partners since February 2024. The envisioned revenue model includes membership fees, grants, and contracts, with partnerships

playing a crucial role. The shift from version one to version two of the framework was discussed; it was intended to simplify and deepen the framework, particularly the repositioning of efforts to transform the sector towards more immediate contributions and plain language communication.

In the feedback discussion on the strategic framework, several key points emerged. The need to clarify and potentially prioritize the concept of verification was highlighted, with discussions on whether it should be a more prominent pillar. The board emphasized the importance of transparency about Accountable Now's role in the global ecosystem and debated the organization's identity—whether as a platform, network, an entity, or part of a larger ecosystem. The role of the Independent Review Panel (IRP) and its potential expanded mandate beyond reporting was considered crucial. Additionally, there was a call for a clear, prioritized focus for the next few years, alongside agility to adapt to changing interests and needs, and ensuring fair compensation for extended roles. Concerns about the feasibility of certain initiatives, such as collective bargaining for CSOs and external complaints handling, were also mentioned. Overall, the discussion aimed at refining the strategy to be more actionable and aligned with member needs. Board members were happy about the development and provided more feedback on the language, priorities, and sequencing of activities, with an eye towards simplifying the messaging and aligning it with member needs. They further discussed next steps for refining the strategic framework, including testing it with members at the upcoming AGM.

**Executive Session ([ACC 24/08](#))**

The next meeting will take place virtually on September 12 2024.

Megan Colnar

Executive Director

Rachel Smith

Chair of the Board

**END**