

SAF Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

June 25th, 2024

[ONLINE]

Meeting Time: 10:30- 12:30

Meeting Facilitator: Abraham Dawidziak Kiermaier

Meeting Minute Taker: India-Lynn Upshaw-Ruffner

Members in attendance:

Ayan Yusuf Karshe (SAF)

Duha Elmardi (SAF)

Iqbal Hussain (SAF)

Mai Pradhan (SAF)

Paige Keleher (Sustainable Concordia)

Rhonda Chung (GSA)

Erik Huang (Community)

Georgette Pascual (Arts & Science)

Members absent:

Maria Chitoroaga (CSU)

Emile Eeckhout (JMSB/CASA)

Mohammad (Haman) Jamali
(Student-at-Large)

Pramila Choudhary (Student-at-Large)

Elizabeth Malitastinic (Fine Arts)

Marissa Profetto (ECA)

Christian Favreau (Office of Sustainability)

Mitchell McLarnon (Concordia Faculty)

1. Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement

a. Sign up for next meeting

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

3. Review and Adoption of Agenda

4. SAF General Updates

a. General updates

- i. Eid was taken off by SAF staff

- ii. Payments have been almost caught up on given the particular situation with no funding from Office of Sustainability
- iii. Research Awards were distributed, but there was a lack of funding due to a lack of department funding due to no communication with depts earlier

b. SLLPF updates

- i. Had a facilitated meeting with the students office - but it was a waste of time. SAF demanded constant third party representation, and would no longer directly communicate with the Office of Sustainability without this. Concordia has an auditor team that is removed from the Concordia hierarchy. Met with auditors a few weeks ago and had a good conversation. Auditors seem to understand the frustration with the situation. Many question mark budget stuff comes from Seb and Cassandra having off the record conversations. Duha combed the minutes to find money details, and Iqbal also collected some budget notes. Auditors will make a recommendation. Next steps: seven different people are doing labour to figure out the conclusion. There is no conclusive answer to what happens next. After all the numbers go through, if there is a discrepancy there will be a discussion with the OOS and payments will be exchanged.
- ii. There were two large transfers from the living labs fund to SAF SPC fund that were documented in the minutes. The first one of 50k from CSU was found by Duha, but the other transfer may have been an online vote over email and it will be looked for by SAF.
- iii. Living Labs moving forward: The living labs framework will not continue as it was. SAF wants to work on reallocating this funding to something not Concordia co-funded. Hopefully with the help of the auditors it can be put on record how messy this situation was and frustrating it was for SAF. Doesn't see the living labs continuing on
 - 1. Also, the Living Labs position was not renewed and this decision was not made in consultation with SAF. Concordia did not seem to think about the labour redistribution that fell onto Duha.
 - 2. Paige: Do we have to give back the 50k donation from CSU then? Was it stipulated to only be used for living labs?
 - a. Duha: no we don't have to repay anything, and that motion was from 2022 anyways and the money has long since been spent. Looking back on the minutes from that time as well, it is clear that this money was never meant to be repaid by SAF to any party
- iv. Ayan: Hyperfocus on budgetary lines could be due to more stringency on Concordia's part due to auditing as part of their case against budget cuts from the government. It could have been the case that at Pietro's office, the living labs money was allocated but in reality did not exist. Rather than being transparent about that, this situation occurred. May be misallocation or mismanagement on the university's part, but has nothing to do with SAF in the end, although SAF ended up being collateral damage

c. Reimbursement updates

- i. 80% of living labs reimbursements have been paid, and 60% of Special projects have been paid. Still waiting for summer fee levy to pay the remainder.
- ii. Finances are going slower than expected, at the moment SAF cannot start summer project funding
- iii. Vote will happen online regarding summer funding
- iv. **Funding via the Special Projects Fund will resume in the fall semester (needs board approval)**
- v. ONLINE: [a motion to delay special projects to the fall, no quorum in this meeting]
- vi. Final fall budget for projects is still to be determined

d. Staff retreat happening in the summer

- i. Will be happening late july

e. Board mandate extension

- i. ONLINE: [a motion will extend the current limit on board members whose terms would be terminated, no quorum in this meeting]
- ii. It would be great to have a motion to extend board mandates due to low general attendance
- iii. There are 2 inactive board members right now

5. Committee Updates


i. Employee request

- Updated list from BoD as to who is in each committee:
 - SPC: Duha, Paige, Erik, Mitchell & Haman
 - HR: Ayan, Georgette, Maria??
 - Fincomm: Iqbal, Erik, Rhonda, Haman
 - Marketing: Mai, Elizabeth, Marisa
 - [SAF Contact List 2023/24 - Google Sheets](#)

a. HR/Governance

i. No updates

b. SPC

- i.  June SPC 2024
- ii. SPC members Paige, Haman and Erik met with Duha on June 10th and have recommendations that need board approval

c. Finncomm

i. Internal Audit Update:

- Shoutout to Duha for going through hundreds of lines and minutes of previous years BoD Meetings to find the relevant conversation pieces and decisions made - thanks to this effort we have managed to defend our position even more securely with this OoS Living Labs fiasco
- All other requested data, documentations, and numbers have been submitted to CU's Internal Audit agents

ii. Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025:

- Expecting a drop of over 25% in Undergrad fee-levies, and over 10% in Grad fee-levies
- Not having to deal with Living Labs under OoS is therefore mathematically and operationally beneficial to our budget lines
- Deficit in this fiscal year will be considerable, so, I recommend that the BoD maintain a high degree of prudence when selecting and approving projects
 - [finance recommends prudence in funding approvals moving forward]
 - [specific recommendations about budget caps or max amounts for funding to be discussed in future meetings]
- Rhonda: Is there a limit we should keep projects at?
- Iqbal: yes, I'd say the cap for projects would be 10k, ideally between 5 and 10k per project
- Duha: we will discuss more in the SPC portion of the meeting

d. Marketing/Outreach

i. Meeting with Elizabeth to touch base, talk about capacity for board members to engage with content.

- For coms specifically, adding a channel to the SAF slack might be better than trying to communicate via email, for efficiency and so emails don't get lost.
 - I recommend we have around three scheduled meetings per semester for the coms committee; one at the beginning, one in the middle, and an optional one at the end.

6. Project Funding Discussion [no project approval discussion at this meeting]

a. SPC recommendations for approval by the rest of the board:

i. Requesting the limit of SPC to be increased to \$3,000

- ONLINE: [motion to increase SPC approval from 1,500\$ to 3,000\$, no quorum at this meeting]
- Erik: The price of things have been going up since that 1.5k was decided to be the limit. Raising it to 3k streamlines the board process as well

ii. Project application cap??

- What we have so far in our existing model:
 - \$1,500 or less: Projects that are short term, one time events, or start-ups that are seeking \$1,500 or less, are eligible to be funded up to 100% of their project's budget.
 - \$1,500-\$10,000: Projects that request between \$1,500 and \$10,000 will be reviewed to determine what percentage of their project budget is eligible for SAF funding. These projects should also investigate secondary sources of funding.

- \$10,000 and more: It is expected that at least 50% of the project's total expenses are funded by other appropriate sources. The project should also have a long term outlook that involves collaboration with numerous Concordia affiliated stakeholders.
- Conversations in SPC:
 - Putting a cap on projects may restrict projects, especially big ones
 - Cap can be based on:
 - Percentage of the total ask (Haman)
 - On or off campus: On campus, we can consider funding more than 10k, off campus, we can fund more than 10k
 - SAF's focus, whether the priority is for recurring projects or newer projects (Erik),
 - Cap based on theme (if we funded too much for one theme vs other themes)
 - Paige recommends we keep the balance between new and recurring projects and we ensure that our application is accessible to new projects so they don't feel discouraged to apply.
 - Rhonda: For transparency & ease of administration, would it be helpful to categorize projects as small, medium and large, based on their projected budgets?
 - Rhonda: smaller application?
 - Erik: what do we want to be more rubric-like regarding our funding? How should we bring more transparency to the decision making process to project applicants?
 - Abraham: there seems to be a line to walk here, like there are certain information available in the application package that streamlines things for Duha. What are we giving, what are we taking, where should we make distance?
 - Erik: we want to invite opportunity, but we don't want people to waste their time on an application
 - Duha: encourages applicants pre-SPC meeting if their projects aren't aligned to change things
 - Erik: maybe there can be a pre-selection for the application? Like a 1 page submission that can solve some red flags immediately? And a mandatory meeting with Duha for project application support?
 - Rhonda: maybe a simplified application for smaller projects only?
 - Braham: this could help with relationship building, for applicants seeing SAF as an organization and not just a bank
 - Ayan: Duha plans to go through her capacity and labour process, so moving forward after that is better to determine what is better to expand versus let sit and grow. Encouraging caution in this discussion. Duha and the SPC did so much labour to make it diverse as possible, but then the system messed it up. Lets hold pace for the wins that are happening, and better assess what is working and what can be expanded moving forward. I don't want the expectation to ever be that the only answer is never more work and labor. Putting a cap on funding after not having it available is bad for optics.
 - Erik: the cap may stem the flow of project requests can help with the increased labour
 - Duha: we are recommending there changes because they are long overdue, especially with the university giving a late fee levy it delayed projects receiving money. After last semesters situation it would be beneficial to revisit the topic of

project capping. Also, she prefers to meet with applicants during the process and often does so. The \$3000 recommendation would lessen the workload for BoD meetings and also the wait time for projects

- Erik: what is the breakdown of small vs. medium vs. large projects? Which project sections receive the most amount of our labour? Maybe virtual presentations to present their project at the SPC meeting could be helpful?
- Ayan: instead of living labs we can use that labour to make grant applying an educational opportunity, making grant applications more decolonial, how can they use their experience at SAF to help them in future applications
- Duha: ideally we do not start this in the fall semester since there are many unknowns for the coming semester. Loves the idea and maybe by the winter semester we can start implementing those changes

iii. Ideas for where the budget from SLLFP can go after the closure of the program

- SPC recommends that we don't spend the amount until we have done a collective visioning between the board and staff for our direction and funding focus moving forward
- We need to have a fundraising plan in place to diversify our funding sources and be able to fund outside of Concordia
- SPC recommends that we do a social gathering since we have been disconnected over the past few months
- Rhonda: what are other fundraising sources for SAF?
 - Duha: right now our fee levy is our only funding source. We used to get 5k from Eric St-Pierre but we no longer get it. Because of the tuition hikes though, we do need to develop these alternative funding sources.
 - Erik: Is grant writing and researching funding sources something we can ask for volunteering for? The OOS has a volunteering program that puts students into different orgs that need them, Any student can apply here
 - Duha: an intern or volunteer would be great to create a funding guide with options? Could help in determining how many hours go into those relationships too
 - Mai: many grants are one time, and funding would be consistent, would that mean the projects each semester would vary?
 - Ayan: many grants are project based, so SAF would apply to a grant and gear a project towards its requirements. There's a way to do it that highlights what the org is already doing. Imperative to decide what we want to do then find grants that fit that, not the other way around
 - Erik: Trying to build partnerships with corporate sponsors could be a solution as well (which can be problematic)
 - Duha: with BDS and Palestine, as well as our mandate to not work with fossil fuels, it will be hard to find sponsors this way
 - Ayan: there can be ways to be more equitable in this process and also become more transparent and take responsibilities
 - Erik: there could be a way to make an agreement with a non-divested company and just not publicize it?
 - Ayan: let's not waste too much time overthinking that structure of these corporate sponsorships, as these big corporations often give sums like 50k without thinking about the mandates of the orgs they are giving it to, so let's not use more labor than them overthinking this

- Iqbal: We have to remain cautious with accepting corporate sponsors since it is easy to get screwed with our reputation. It must be remembered that the situation we are in is thanks to OOS, and can serve as a reminder to how any outside entity can affect the SAF negatively. Let's continue putting out the fires before looking outside. Sometimes you gotta look at the devils horns and say nice horns
- Ayan: reallocating funding to individuals effected by the damages of navigating the Concordia colonial system is important. We can also focus on chasing Concordia funding sources
- Erik: being transparent with corporate sponsorships would be important like SAF would have terms that the corp would need to agree to, and making these sponsors available for project applicants would be important too, and an open line of communication for applicants to voice their opinions would be important

7. Community Announcements and Ancillary Items

a. Newsletter changes & proposal plan.

- i. As of now we do not have any scheduled newsletters/announcements for our community to be debriefed in a concise format to learn about our activities/status.
- ii. I propose we have one newsletter at the beginning of the semester, and one at the end of the semester.
 - Opening newsletter with reminders for application process, update on any changes/announcements, upcoming events, etc.
 - Closing newsletter with a recap on funded projects/how much funding was allocated, any changes for the next semester,

b. Accountability post/letter/update on SPF

- i. Decisions need to be finalized, and once that is complete I will send this in an email to SAF/The BOD for approval.

c. Annual Event with funded projects/community/Research Awards?

- i. This idea has not been deeply conceptualized, however, I want to hear what we have to think about discussing the previous community events we have held and determine what was successful, where we can do better, and how we can bring our community together in a physical space, like a gala, award ceremony, collective workshop, etc.

8. Adjournment

Online votes:

Link to poll:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfEQ1MXI-1-U4qTqMLonGg4tmv2Zlp3HRTEL9U5qwoSL_E_LCA/viewform

Motion to approve the request to postpone the funding of special projects until the fall semester:

- **Moved by: Elizabeth**
- **Seconded by: Erik**
 - In favour: 8
 - Against: 0
 - Abstain: 0
- *Motion passes*

Motion to approve the request to increase the limit of SPC to \$3,000:

- **Moved by: Elizabeth**
- **Seconded by: Erik**
 - In favour: 8
 - Against: 0
 - Abstain: 0
- *Motion passes*

Motion to approve the request to extend the current limit on board members whose terms would otherwise be terminated:

- **Moved by: Elizabeth**
- **Seconded by: Erik**
 - In favour: 8
 - Against: 0
 - Abstain: 0
- *Motion passes*