

DNS-OARC Board of Directors Election Procedure

Background

Since its creation, DNS-OARC has used [Single Transferable Vote](#) (specifically, Scottish STV) as the vote-counting method in its annual election of members of the Board of Directors. Originally using the open source tool OpenSTV, OARC moved to [OpaVote](#), the web-based version of the same tool, in 2022 with the first online-only Annual General Meeting.

OpaVote elections run for multiples of 24 hours, less two minutes. OARC normally runs Board of Directors elections for one day, beginning shortly after the expected end of the Annual General Meeting. For example, this may be from 18:01 UTC on the day of the AGM, until 17:59 UTC on the day after the AGM.

The election is administered by a staff member. Election processes, configuration, data, and reports are collected and recorded for posterity and potential review in OARC's private version control repository.

Pre-Election

OARC Member organizations are required to set a Voting Representative in the [OARC Member Portal](#) by a particular deadline, normally about one week prior to the election. OARC uses the email address of this representative to populate the list of voters in the OpaVote election.

Roughly one day after the deadline, OARC will email all of the voting representatives with some general information about the election process, and to set expectations for the upcoming election.

Voting

The election starts automatically at a predetermined time, published as part of the agenda of the AGM and election. At the time that voting opens, OpaVote sends an email to each email address on its voter list. The email contains some information about the election being voted on, and a unique voting link containing a hash value assigned to that email address. The link leads to a ballot on the OpaVote web site with instructions for voting, and a list of candidates. The order of the list of candidates is randomized for each visit to the ballot.

The voter can add any number of candidates from the candidate list to the ballot. Candidate names added to the ballot can be dragged into any order, to indicate the voter's preference. The most preferred candidate goes at the top of the list (position 1) and the least preferred candidate at the bottom of the list.

Voters can vote for none, one, some, or all candidates in order to submit their ballot. The ballot is not limited to the number of open seats; all candidates can be put on the ballot.

In order to have the ballot counted it must be submitted by the close of the election.

OARC configures its elections as anonymous. The OpaVote web site maintains a link between each voter's unique hash and their email address so that it can report on which voters have cast a vote, but it does not reveal the hash value, or the link between an email address and a particular ballot. It is impossible for anyone other than the voter or the operators of OpaVote itself to discover how an individual voted.

Post-Election

When the election ends, OpaVote makes available to the staff member administrating the election the following materials:

- a list of the elected candidates

- a summary of each round of ballot counting, including indications of which candidates were elected or eliminated, and the counts of redistributed surplus votes
- a ballot file containing each ballot, some general metadata about the election, and the ordered list of candidates

The summary and list of elected candidates is passed on to the board for ratification. Once ratified, OpaVote is instructed to Publish the results. OpaVote immediately sends an email to every voter including a link to the results. At around the same time, OARC emails the same link and information about the election results to the members' mailing list.

Ranking Winners

Normally, all Directors are elected for a two year term. From time to time OARC may have open seats on the Board of Directors for different term lengths. For example, a board member may resign before the completion of their regular term, and in order to maintain the balance of re-electing half of the board each year, one open seat may be filled with a new director for only a single-year term.

In order to do this equitably, it is necessary to be able to rank the winners of the election in order to assign the single-year term to the lowest ranked winner.

While it is common to be able to identify the last-elected winner, the STV counting process does not guarantee this. It is possible for two or more candidates to be elected on the same round of counting, including on the final round. For those cases it is necessary to have a process planned and documented in advance for identifying who will fill the partial-term seat.

With OpaVote, this can be accomplished by configuring a Count. A Count is the OpaVote term for an election where the ballots have been collected by some means other than running a full election on the site. In this case, the "other method" is the previously run election.

In order to break a last-place tie, OARC will follow this procedure:

1. An OpaVote Count will be configured with the same settings as the recently concluded election, except with one-fewer open seats.
2. The ballot file downloaded from the election will be re-uploaded into the Count, and OpaVote will be asked to re-count the same ballots. The last-place winner will be identified by the process of elimination.

This process can be repeated—with successively fewer open seats—in order to break a last-place tie of any number of candidates.

Document Retention

OARC saves a document describing the full procedure used to run the election, a description of each step taken during setup and administration of the election, and any decisions taken to handle abnormal circumstances along with their reasoning and justification.

Along side this document is stored every piece of data and configuration used in preparation of the election, as well as every piece of data generated by OpaVote.

These documents are stored in OARC's private version control repository. They are used to inform the administration of the following year's election, and can be used to validate any previous election if necessary.