

Advisory Board Meetings

May 31, 2018

This meeting took place with Advisory Board members attending the 2018 Aspen-Nicholas Water Forum.

Board Members Present (5 of 9)

Jerad Bales
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Executive Director Job Search

The primary purpose for this meeting was to discuss the process and criteria for hiring the Executive Director.

Location: Does the Executive Director need to be located at Duke?

Following conversations with potential candidates, it became evident that many were interested in the position, but not interested in moving to Durham, NC. It was decided that the person could be remote, though there are limitations on hiring since Duke is only willing to hire remotely for eight states. In this scenario, the ideal location would be Washington D.C., where Duke has office space. It is envisioned the first year will involve significant travel by the Executive Director to meet with partners and stakeholders. Costs will be lower if that person is located near a major airport. However, there are tradeoffs if the person is not local and there will need to be a lot of intentionality and travel between this person and Durham. The workplace is changing and it is possible to work remotely as long as there is adequate face time.

Type of Hire: What type of hire should the Executive Director be?

Duke University has great benefits, and it is not unheard of for candidates to seek a temporary position at the University in order to secure a more permanent position. Hiring as a Duke employee runs the risk of losing the candidate once they are in the Duke system. Given that, it may be ideal to hire the candidate as a consultant, or buy a portion of the candidate's time from the institution they currently reside with. The risk of hiring a consultant is that they may try to claim the IoW and move it away from a neutral, open space at a university. It would have to be the right person to take that level of risk.

Does the Executive Director need to be full-time?

If we go the route of consulting, does the Executive Director need to be a full-time job? Given the IoW is a temporary position for the ED, it may be unrealistic for a consultant to commit 100% of their time without maintaining other relationships and work once they are done with the IoW. It would be ideal for the Executive Director to be full-time, but not necessary if they make good staff hires. The right person

with the right resources and networks could rapidly advance the IoW without being full-time, but we'd want at least 75-100% of their time dedicated to the Internet of Water.

How does the Advisory Board want to engage with the search?

The Advisory Board does not want to screen resumes. It would be most efficient for the Duke search committee to pick the top three to five candidates and circulate their information to the Advisory Group for a thumbs up or thumbs down. If there is not consensus than we can hold a group call and talk through differences. The Duke search committee should ask the candidates to articulate their vision for the IoW as a screening tool. If the candidate has a completely different vision of the IoW, they probably aren't the right person. If they cannot articulate a vision at all, then they are definitely not the right person. The IoW will need to show early wins and use cases. The right person is someone who has been thinking about the value add, and who can communicate the value compellingly.

Long-term Home for IoW

What types of exit strategies should the IoW work towards?

Many data hubs and repositories struggle to find a financial model that is self-sustaining. For the Internet of Water to exit well in the next 3-5 years it will be important for the IoW to develop products that are attractive and useful to institutions interested in incorporating the IoW into its portfolio. For instance, if the IoW wanted to demonstrate the use of water data to identify corporate water risk it could become attractive to CERES, the Environmental Defense Fund, or the National Research Council. Another potential candidate is the Water Resources Institute (WRI) given their work with the Aqueduct tool. This could also help the IoW to move towards international water. The Smithsonian could be another option. The Executive Director should early on build a hypothesis tree around exit strategies to ensure the long-term viability of the Internet of Water. One branch is the exit strategy, one branch is the independent non-profit, one branch is housing it in an academic program within a university. Then for each scenario, work backwards to test the hypothesis and explore business models and what the IoW would need to do in the next three years for each strategy. You'd also want to include the private sector – such as Google or Microsoft in the option set.

Next Steps

What types of things does the IoW start-up team need to do sooner than later?

- There needs to be a communications and role out plan that identifies your audiences and persuades them of the value of the IoW. The IoW currently remains nebulous and unclear how different groups can participate. It is going to be very important to communicate clearly and frequently with audiences and partners. A big piece of the Internet of Water in the beginning will be on communications. Developing a tagline to say what the IoW is as early as possible is needed.
- Identify the different audiences for the Internet of Water and include the academic and scientific community in the process.

- The platform for many to engage with the Internet of Water will be over the internet. Invest in the design and flow of the website. Make sure to have some quick wins and calls to action at the launch. As staff are hired, more tools and resources for deeper dives will become available. Once the initial design and website are completed, it may be worth hiring a web developer rather than contracting out. Another option is to ask Microsoft, or a similar company, to do a service with you for a year. It is one of the non-profit ways they give back to the community. This would provide amazing technical resources and then you can hire out for the user interface portion. The back end developer and user interface person will need to have some domain expertise in water.
- While waiting for the Executive Director to be hired so additional staff hires can be made, does the IoW need a data person or a water person? There are some who say it is easier to teach data architect than domain expertise, while others say it is easier to teach domain expertise than data architect. The ideal would be to hire someone who has a lot of one and a little of the other. Others think a user interface person only needs to understand the data life cycle for different organizations to understand how people want to access data.