

# Communicating With The Board - Best Practices

The Board regularly communicates with hundreds of people about a wide variety of issues, and any Apache project committer may have questions or ideas to present to the Board. Historically virtually all of this has been through simple emails to the central Board list. Here are some collected best practices for communicating with the Board - either on board@ or elsewhere. We also have a specific guide for "[What Emails Belong On board@ \(or should be elsewhere\)](#)"

## Escalation Guide - How To Raise Concerns Between Communities

Sometimes, we need to raise a serious issue within one project community or committee at the ASF - or even perhaps *between* communities or from a project to the board. Please read this escalation guide before bringing your questions to board@:

<https://www.apache.org/board/escalation>

## Discussion: How Do We Communicate Now?

As an all-volunteer organization with a long history, there are a lot of things we do "because we've always done them that way". As we scale past the point where individual volunteers can pay attention to everything on the board@ list, it's interesting to see all the different things we talk about, or need to make decisions about - or, to explicitly let all of our projects know about important activities.

The Board as a group uses multiple email lists to communicate, and regularly works with many different people and groups/committees. If you've been here forever, it's obvious. If you're newer than that, it's often confusing - or it takes extra time to clarify your request or question into the right place to get a definitive answer. The Escalation Guide above may help as well.

## Where Does The Board Communicate?

The board@ private mailing list is where the majority of work is done. All directors read this list; all PMC Chairs are required to be subscribed to the list. Many ASF Members also subscribe to the list and participate regularly, as do many of our operations officers (Conferences, Fundraising, Infra, etc.) We also use the board-chat@ private mailing list for non-governance matters the board wants to start discussing but that PMC chairs are not expected to read, like planning for F2F meetings or other inter-director announcements like offline time.

The board also regularly communicates with PMCs on their private@ list for feedback on quarterly reports or any time the board has a question or issue for a PMC. In some cases, the board will use dev@ lists or other public lists, when appropriate.

Most directors on the board are also subscribed to various operations@ and project lists; however most of the "work" there is as a volunteer on that operations team or project, not necessarily as a director.

## Recurring types of communication with/from the board:

Subject/Topic	Documented?
[NOTICE] Jane Doe for <project> PMC	<a href="https://www.apache.org/dev/pmc.html#newpmc">https://www.apache.org/dev/pmc.html#newpmc</a>
[REPORT] Board Report For <project>	<a href="https://www.apache.org/foundation/board/reporting">https://www.apache.org/foundation/board/reporting</a> No specific source; see also reporter.apache.org (which directly submits reports without sending this email)
Re: Board Feedback on 2018-09-19 <project> report	When directors have feedback on PMC quarterly reports, automatic email goes to the private@ list and expects the project to provide an answer there and back on the board@ list. Source: \$whimsy/board/agenda/views/actions/feedback.json.rb
Missing <project> report	When a project is late submitting a quarterly report, a director will email the private@ list and cc: the PMC Chair and the board list Source: \$whimsy/board/agenda/views/buttons/email.js.rb
Proposed Resolution : Establish <project>	When an incubator podling graduates and proposes becoming TLP. <a href="https://incubator.apache.org/guides/graduation.html#tlp-resolution">https://incubator.apache.org/guides/graduation.html#tlp-resolution</a>
Congratulations on your new role at Apache	Secretary sends from Whimsy after Board meetings to inform new PMC chairs of their officer role (after a chair change) Email source in Whimsy project
PMC Roll Call - subject varies	When the board sees a project is inactive, has not reported recently, or is otherwise unresponsive to board questions, they request a Roll Call. Details of the process: <a href="https://www.apache.org/dev/pmc.html#roll-call">https://www.apache.org/dev/pmc.html#roll-call</a>

## Brainstorming: How Can We Improve?

- Document and use different mailing lists for specific and bounded purposes. For example: board-chat@ list.
  - Benefit: makes it easy for list readers to follow, reduces traffic.
  - Drawback: strong opposition from some list readers (historically, this often prevents new lists)
- Use [SubjectTags] on emails - somewhat regularly done with \[NOTICE], \[REPORT] \[VOTE] emails
  - Benefit: allows people with mail filters to easily categorize mail
  - Drawback: very inconsistent usage except in very specific documented processes
- Implement alternative task or communication tracking tools
  - Benefit: some specific tasks can be done on Whimsy.a.o, which ensures that requests are routed to the right place while still echoing the results to the appropriate list.
  - Drawback: requires coding & maintenance of any automation. Board Agenda, self-subscription, self-PMC list editing are all examples of successful tools.

## Improvements: Concrete Ideas For Better Communication