



A L E T H I A

The Founding Pathway

How a digital nation comes into being

Alethia begins not with a launch event, a press release, or a venture round. It begins with a few people who care, doing the work.

Introduction

This document describes how Alethia is brought into being in the physical world. It is the most uncertain document in the founding library, because nobody has built quite this thing before. What follows is the most honest plan we can offer — a path that we believe will work, with the acknowledgement that the path will need to bend as reality teaches us things we cannot yet know.

Alethia's founding model is grassroots. There is no founding corporation, no venture capital round, no government partnership. Alethia grows because people choose to grow it — volunteers contributing time, donors contributing money, citizens contributing themselves. This is slower than the alternatives. It is also the only model consistent with the Charter.

This document covers five things: who builds Alethia, how it is funded, the phases of its growth, the risks along the way, and how to know when each phase has truly succeeded.

Part I — Founding Principles

Five principles govern how Alethia is brought into being. Each follows directly from the Charter, and each places a constraint on what founders may and may not do.

1. No Owner

Alethia has no founder in the proprietary sense. The people who do the early work earn the gratitude of those who come after, but they earn no ownership, no equity, no special voice in governance, and no claim on the future. Citizenship is the only standing within Alethia, and it must be earned through the same examination as every other citizen.

2. No Corporate Form Above the Charter

Alethia may, for purely practical reasons, need a legal entity in the physical world — to hold donations, pay server bills, sign contracts. This entity is a steward, never a master. Its constitution must bind it to serve Alethia's Charter and to dissolve cleanly when Alethia's own governance is mature enough to operate without it.

3. Slow is Acceptable

Alethia is not in a race. It does not need to scale to millions of citizens in its first year. A small, healthy community of thoughtful citizens is more valuable than a large, fragile one. The founding pathway is designed to grow at the pace that allows quality and culture to be sustained.

4. Transparency from Day Zero

From the moment the first line of code is written, all activity is public. The repository is open. The financial accounts are public. The decision logs are public. There is no private founding period in which the rules are being made for everyone else behind closed doors.

The Library of Alethia — the public collection of all founding and official documents — is the primary expression of this principle. It is not a marketing document or a summary. It is the complete record, including the arguments, the revisions, and the reasoning. Anyone in the world may read it and hold Alethia to account against what it has written down.

5. The Charter Comes First

Every decision made during the founding is tested against the Charter. If a tempting shortcut — a venture round, a corporate partnership, a closed-source dependency — would violate the Charter, it is declined. The Charter is not negotiable, especially during the period when it would be easiest to compromise it.

Part II — Who Builds Alethia

Alethia is built by people who decide to build it. There is no application process to be a founding contributor. Anyone may help, in any way that genuinely advances the work, on terms they set for themselves.

In practice, the founding community will include people who fall into several rough roles.

The Stewards

A small initial group — perhaps three to seven people — who hold the practical responsibility for the founding period. They coordinate work, maintain the public repository, run the early infrastructure, and speak for the project externally when speaking is required. Stewards are volunteers. They receive no compensation beyond the

eventual gratitude of the community. They are explicitly not owners, founders in the legal sense, or governors. They are the people who happen to be doing the work in the founding period.

Stewards rotate. As the community grows, new people take on stewardship responsibilities and earlier stewards step back. By the time Alethia reaches its first thousand citizens, stewardship has either dissolved entirely into normal civic governance, or has been formalised by citizen referendum into a defined transitional role.

The Builders

People with technical skills — programmers, designers, system administrators, cryptographers, security researchers, documentation writers — who contribute work to the civic codebase. Builders are not employees. They contribute what they can, when they can. The earliest builders accept that their work may never be financially compensated. Later builders, once the Common Fund is operational, may earn Eranos for their contributions.

The Thinkers

People whose contribution is not code but reasoning. Editors who improve the Charter. Ethicists who stress-test the examination. Lawyers who help navigate the real-world legal landscape. Translators who make Alethia accessible across languages. Educators who help citizens prepare for the examination. The founding community needs as many thinkers as it does builders.

The Donors

People who give money. The first donations are tiny, individual, and freely given. As the project grows, larger donations may come from aligned foundations and individual benefactors. The hard rule is that no donation buys influence. A million-dollar gift confers no more standing than a five-dollar one. Donor names are published, donor expectations are not entertained, and any donor who attempts to convert their giving into influence has their donation refunded and is publicly named for the attempt.

The First Citizens

Eventually, the Entrance Examination opens and the first citizens are admitted. From that moment, they are the highest authority. The stewards, builders, thinkers, and donors continue to contribute, but governance — what Alethia does next — belongs to the citizens. The founding period properly ends not when a website launches, but when citizens begin to vote on what Alethia is to become.

Part III — The Phases of Founding

Alethia's founding proceeds in five rough phases. The boundaries between phases are approximate. Some work in later phases will begin in earlier ones. The phases are not promised to take any specific amount of time — they take however long they take.

PHASE 0: THE SEED

Phase 0 — The Seed

The seed phase exists before there is anything to show. It is the period in which the founding documents are written, the initial conversations happen, and the first stewards find each other. During this phase, there are no servers, no code, no citizens. There is only an idea and a small group of people who believe it is worth attempting.

This phase succeeds when there is a complete Charter, a working examination specification, a written technical plan, and at least three people willing to take on early stewardship. The deliverable is documents and intent, nothing more.

Phase 0 costs nothing beyond time. It may take weeks or months.

The Phase 0 deliverables — the Charter, the Entrance Examination, the Civic Guide, the Technical Specification, this Founding Pathway, the Citizen Credential Specification, and the Visual Identity Guide — are collected in the Library of Alethia, the public record of the nation. The Library of Alethia is open to the world from the moment it exists, before any citizen has been admitted. Transparency with the outside world begins in Phase 0, not after launch.

PHASE 1: THE WORKSHOP

Phase 1 — The Workshop

The workshop phase is when building begins. The public code repository is established. The first servers are spun up — likely on rented infrastructure paid for from small founder contributions. The identity system is prototyped, even if crudely. A development version of the Arbiter's rule engine and constitutional guardrails is built and tested.

During the workshop phase, Alethia is not yet open to citizens. The work is done in public — anyone can watch, read the code, and contribute — but there is no examination, no citizenship, and no live services. The purpose of this phase is to verify that the architecture works, that the founding documents survive contact with reality, and that the technical pieces fit together.

This phase succeeds when a small group of stewards can simulate the full citizenship and civic loop end to end — pass the examination, receive a credential, transact in the test Eranos, vote in a test poll. The deliverable is a working prototype, public, open-source, and rough around the edges.

Phase 1 costs hundreds to low thousands of dollars in infrastructure. It may take six to eighteen months.

PHASE 2: THE FOUNDING

Phase 2 — The Founding

The founding phase is when Alethia opens. The Entrance Examination becomes available to anyone in the world who wishes to take it. The first citizens are admitted. The Arbiter begins operating on the live ledger. The Citizens' Assembly holds its first poll.

This phase is the most fragile. Early citizens are the people who will shape Alethia's culture, and culture is far harder to build than code. The stewards focus heavily on welcoming, on conflict resolution, on listening carefully when early citizens identify things that do not work, and on resisting the temptation to take shortcuts that will haunt the nation later.

This phase succeeds when Alethia has at least one hundred active citizens, a functioning Citizens' Council, a healthy Commons with regular civic discussion, and at least one full quarterly referendum completed with broad citizen participation. The deliverable is a small but real digital nation.

Phase 2 costs low thousands of dollars per month in infrastructure and dedicated steward attention. It may take one to three years.

PHASE 3: THE GROWING

Phase 3 — The Growing

The growing phase is when Alethia expands beyond its founding core. The Entrance Examination is translated into more languages. Additional node operators come online from outside the founding region. The Common Fund begins paying meaningful civic dividends. The citizen-built service replacements for borrowed open-source components begin in earnest.

Most importantly, this is the phase where stewardship dissolves into civic governance. The remaining stewardship tasks are taken on by elected or randomly selected citizens through normal civic processes. The original stewards become ordinary citizens — still contributing, but with no special standing.

This phase succeeds when Alethia operates entirely under citizen governance, no founding steward holds any special role, and the nation continues to grow and improve through its own internal processes rather than founder direction. The deliverable is a self-governing nation.

Phase 3 may take several years to a decade.

PHASE 4: THE MATURITY

Phase 4 — The Maturity

Maturity is not an event but a state. Alethia is mature when its founding documents have been amended by citizens to reflect the lived experience of citizenship; when the Arbiter is a familiar institution rather than a novelty; when generations of citizens have come, served, and stepped back; when the borrowed open-source components have largely been replaced; when other digital communities look to Alethia's model as proof that another way is possible.

There is no fixed test for maturity, and no event that marks its arrival. We will know it when we see it, and probably not before.

Part IV — How Alethia is Funded

Alethia rejects advertising, data brokering, corporate ownership, and any funding model that would compromise its values. This leaves a narrow set of acceptable funding sources, each of which must be carefully managed.

Direct Citizen and Supporter Donations

Individual donations are the primary funding model for Alethia. Anyone may donate, in any amount. All donations are recorded in a public ledger. Donations buy no influence, confer no standing, and are never accepted on conditions other than the published terms.

A typical funding mix during early phases:

- ▶ Recurring small donations from supporters (e.g. monthly contributions of modest amounts)
- ▶ One-time individual donations of various sizes
- ▶ Occasional larger gifts from aligned individuals or foundations
- ▶ Direct contributions of in-kind support (server time, professional services, translation work)

Aligned Foundation Grants

Established non-profit foundations focused on digital rights, open-source software, internet freedom, or democratic technology may be sources of grant funding. Each grant must be reviewed against the Charter before acceptance. Grants with conditions that compromise the Charter are refused, regardless of amount.

The Common Fund

Once the Eranos is operational, the Common Fund accumulates from the wealth cap, demurrage decay, and flat market transaction fees. The Common Fund is denominated in Eranos, not in external currency, so it does not directly pay for infrastructure costs. However, it can be used to compensate citizens (in Eranos) for work that reduces external costs — for example, citizens who run nodes from their own resources earn Eranos as recognition, even though their infrastructure was paid for externally.

What Alethia Will Never Accept

- ▶ Investment in any form. Alethia is not a company; there are no shares, no equity, no returns to investors.
- ▶ Corporate sponsorship that creates dependency or expectation.

- ▶ Government funding that comes with conditions on Alethia’s policies.
- ▶ Anonymous donations above a threshold set by citizen poll (to prevent influence by unknown parties).
- ▶ Cryptocurrency speculation income (treating the Eranos as an investment vehicle is prohibited by the Charter).

Financial Transparency

Alethia’s financial records are public from day zero. Every dollar received is recorded, with the donor named (unless they have requested anonymity, in which case the donation is recorded as anonymous with the amount visible). Every dollar spent is recorded, with the purpose visible. There are no off-record funds, no founder discretionary accounts, no shadow budgets. This transparency exists from the first donation, not just once Alethia is large enough that scrutiny would matter.

Part V — Reaching the First Citizens

How does Alethia find its first hundred citizens? Its first thousand? This is one of the most practical questions of the founding period, and the answer matters enormously to the culture of the nation.

Word of Reasoning, Not Word of Promotion

Alethia does not market. There are no advertisements, no influencer campaigns, no growth hacks. The Charter would reject these methods as inconsistent with Alethia’s respect for human attention. People come to Alethia because they hear about it from someone they respect, read the founding documents, and decide they want to seek citizenship.

This is slow. It is also the only way to build a citizenry that genuinely shares Alethian values. A citizen who arrived because of a clever advertisement is a citizen who arrived under false pretences.

Where Conversations Happen

In the early phases, conversations about Alethia happen in specific kinds of places: open-source communities, digital rights forums, academic conferences on privacy and democratic technology, communities of writers and thinkers who care about the questions Alethia is trying to answer. Stewards and early supporters speak about Alethia honestly in

these settings, answering questions, refining arguments, and inviting interested people to read the founding documents.

The Founding Cohort

The first hundred citizens of Alethia matter more than any subsequent hundred. They will set the cultural tone, write much of the early civic content, and shape how future citizens experience joining. The founding cohort should therefore be diverse — by background, by perspective, by skill, by language, by life experience — and selected only by the genuine examination, not by invitation or social connection to stewards.

Welcoming

Each new citizen, especially in the early phases, is personally welcomed. A specific existing citizen takes responsibility for orienting them, answering questions, and helping them understand how to participate. This is not automation. It is one human being introducing another to a community. As Alethia grows, this welcoming role rotates among citizens through normal civic processes.

Part VI — Risks and How to Survive Them

The founding period is fragile, and a number of failure modes are plausible. Naming them honestly is the first step in surviving them.

Founder Drift

Risk: the early stewards begin to treat themselves as owners, accumulate informal power, and prevent the transition to citizen governance from completing.

Defence: explicit term limits on steward roles, regular public review of steward activity, automatic dissolution of stewardship at defined growth milestones, public Charter commitments by every steward not to seek special standing in the long term.

Premature Scale

Risk: Alethia attracts too much attention too early, grows beyond what its infrastructure or culture can support, and breaks under the load.

Defence: the Entrance Examination naturally rate-limits growth. Stewards may also temporarily pause new examinations if quality of welcoming or infrastructure cannot keep up. Slow growth is not failure.

Capture

Risk: a well-funded external party — a corporation, a state, a movement — attempts to take over Alethia by funding a majority of nodes, infiltrating with many citizens, or buying steward loyalty.

Defence: federated infrastructure prevents node capture by any single party. The Charter's protections against political surveillance and corporate influence apply from day zero. Stewards cannot be bought because they have no special authority to sell. Citizen majority voting prevents any single group from imposing its will.

Cultural Drift

Risk: as Alethia grows, the careful, reflective culture of the founding citizens erodes, replaced by the patterns of the broader internet — outrage, point-scoring, tribalism.

Defence: the Code of Civic Conduct, citizen tribunal enforcement, the continuing influence of the Civic Guide on every new citizen, the deliberately slow pace of growth, and the lack of engagement-maximising algorithms in any Alethian service. Culture is preserved by intent, not by accident.

Failure to Launch

Risk: the founding work stalls before reaching Phase 2, the stewards lose energy, and Alethia never opens to citizens.

Defence: the founding documents are themselves a contribution to the world even if no nation is ever founded. The Charter, examination, civic guide, and technical specification can inspire others. Alethia's success would be wonderful. Its attempt is already meaningful.

Part VII — What Success Looks Like

Alethia’s success cannot be measured by user growth, revenue, or engagement metrics. The traditional measures of the surveillance economy are precisely what Alethia rejects. The real measures of success are different.

Alethia is succeeding when:

- ▶ Citizens routinely use the Commons to think out loud about difficult questions, in ways they could not safely do elsewhere.
- ▶ Citizens trade fairly with each other in the Market, contributing skills and goods to people they have never met but whom they trust through shared citizenship.
- ▶ Citizen-initiated legislation regularly produces small, useful improvements to civic life.
- ▶ Citizens disagree, sometimes sharply, and resolve their disagreements through reason and process rather than escalation.
- ▶ The Arbiter’s reasoning is questioned, refined, and improved through citizen input.
- ▶ New citizens, after passing the examination, find that Alethia is what the documents promised it would be.
- ▶ Other digital communities study Alethia’s model and adopt parts of it.
- ▶ The founding stewards are barely remembered, because the citizens long ago became the authors of their own nation.

The deepest measure of success is this: that Alethia continues, grows, and improves long after anyone who founded it has stopped being needed.

That is the project. It begins, like all worthwhile projects, with people choosing to begin.



A L E T H I A

Truth. Reason. Dignity.