



FUNDING FREE KNOWLEDGE THE WIKI WAY

**Wikimedia Foundation's
Participatory Grantmaking**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wikimedia is a global movement whose mission is to bring free educational content to the world. Through diverse projects¹ including Wikipedia, and the support structure of the nonprofit Wikimedia Foundation, the Wikimedia community is mobilized around the belief that free knowledge — free access to information and the ability to learn in your own language — is a human right. Since the beginning of the Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) Grantmaking Programs, this belief and a shared set of values such as Transparency, Accountability, Stewardship, Shared Power, and Internationalism have informed the distribution of over \$15 million dollars invested in the evolution of the international Wikimedia movement.

This report is a comparative review of the Wikimedia Foundation’s grantmaking practices, situating the work of the Foundation within a larger field of practice in philanthropy called Participatory Grantmaking². As authors of “Who Decides?: How Participatory Grantmaking Benefits Donors, Communities, and Movements³,” The Lafayette Practice⁴ (TLP) found that Participatory Grantmaking is an effective and impactful strategy for resource distribution. Simultaneously — and perhaps more importantly — **we found that Participatory Grantmaking is a powerful movement building strategy, increasing movement resources of not only money but also knowledge and self-determination.**

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In 2014, The Lafayette Practice conducted new research on the Wikimedia Foundation to provide a first ever, in-depth insight into the Foundation’s unique grantmaking practices in the context of this philanthropic strategy.

The Wikimedia Foundation is innovative and groundbreaking in its application of Participatory Grantmaking at — by far — the largest scale we have seen, in terms of both collective participation and distributed funds.

- We found that Wikimedia Foundation grantmaking is the largest known Participatory Grantmaking Fund. WMF Grantmaking exceeds any of the eight funds documented in the “Who Decides” report. In our original study, which did not include the WMF, the highest documented

¹ <https://www.wikimedia.org/>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_grantmaking

³ <http://www.thelafayettepractice.com/reports/whodecides/>

⁴ <http://www.thelafayettepractice.com/>

grantmaker budget was \$2.37 million in 2012. In sharp contrast, the Wikimedia Foundation 2014-2015 grantmaking budget is over \$7 million⁵.

- The Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking process is uniquely designed to reflect the ethics, methods, and agreements that are core to the overall Wikipedia model. Proposals are workshopped on public wikis and improved by volunteer editors. Decisions about which proposals to fund and how much funding to offer are made publicly on wikis, in cooperation with volunteer committee members, Board members, and staff, and with input from the larger community.
- Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking has the largest peer-review participation of any funder of its kind in the world. As of June 2014, 54 community members were involved in the IEG, PEG, and APG committees. These committees are intentionally designed to be geographically and gender diverse, and include community members involved in different Wikimedia projects. In addition to committee members, grantmaking processes include open comment periods, and as of December 2014, over 1,500 unique Meta-wiki users have contributed by submitting requests, commenting, editing, etc.⁶
- Just as anyone can become a Wikipedia editor, anyone who edits Wikipedia can make a proposal to the Wikimedia Foundation. The Foundation seeks to support good ideas from anywhere in the movement including individuals, informal groups, and formal Wikimedia organizations. This flexibility and accessibility stands out as unique in our research. The opportunity to receive individual project or small group funding from an international Participatory Grantmaking Fund is unusual, and will likely generate attention, interest, and further research within the larger philanthropic field.
- The Grantmaking team serves as an amplifier, facilitator, and connector of ideas, experimentation, and programs across the Wikimedia movement, and a critical entry point for the entire organization to learn from and serve multiple communities better. In 2013-2014, the Grantmaking team supported the growth of knowledge content and communities through more than 200 grants and other resources, in 66 countries, over 30 language Wikipedias and sister projects, working directly with over 300 community leaders and supporting over 4000 people across the global movement.
- At Wikimedia Foundation, a large percentage of total funds are raised from readers and contributors to Wikimedia projects, and therefore require a high level of community-wide accountability, transparency, and visibility - yielding a grantmaking process that is widely participatory from income to expense. Because Wikimedia is one of the top global websites, the Foundation is able to actualize the vision of a social justice movement funded and supported by its community. Witness the 2013-14 online fundraising campaign which generated a donation total of \$37 million from over 2.5 million individual Wikipedia readers around the world.⁷ In this way, the Wikimedia Foundation's fundraising model reflects and aligns with the intentions of the early Participatory Grantmaking movement, while representing an exciting, stand-out example within the field.

We hope that this report allows the reader to not only learn about the unique grantmaking and decision-making practices of the Wikimedia Foundation, but also to contextualize the values that drive this work, and to situate the Wikimedia Foundation within long-established efforts to democratize grantmaking in the service of movements for social justice and human rights.

⁵ Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. Page 5.

⁶ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/foundation/e/e0/2014-15_Wikimedia_Foundation_Plan.pdf. Page 37.

⁷ http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Fundraising_reports

Often people don't see the politics behind their access to Wikipedia. At the end of the day, one of the most powerful ways to change the world around you is by changing yourself, and one of the most powerful ways to change yourself is through informing yourself. In a world in which everything is steadily either more corporatized or more securitized — and often both— by corporations and the State, I'm here to do this work because the Wikimedia movement is not just a website. Yes, it is one of the top websites, but it's actually a public domain space, a public space online that is bigger than all of us.

Even with the journey ahead of us, what it has already done is transform the world, in terms of the way people access and think about knowledge and education. At the end of the day, human rights should not be limited to what States offer us as a framework. It should be about how we experience the multitude of choices we have. That is what we are trying to do.

— Anasuya Sengupta, Senior Director of Grantmaking

The Grantmaking Model at Wikimedia Foundation (WMF)

Wikimedia Foundation staff and board, Wikimedia volunteers, and Wikimedia organizations work together to find and fund innovative and impactful projects, and to evaluate and share the impact and the learning of the work being done across the Wikimedia movement. In addition to financial support, WMF provides grantees with tools, mentorship, and opportunities to tell their own stories and share their knowledge.⁸

WMF gives funding across a broad spectrum of movement constituents, including individuals and informal groups as well as staffed organizations, through six processes. In this analysis, we will focus on the three largest programs: Individual Engagement Grants, Project and Event Grants, and Annual Plan Grants.

⁸ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Start#explore-grantmaking>

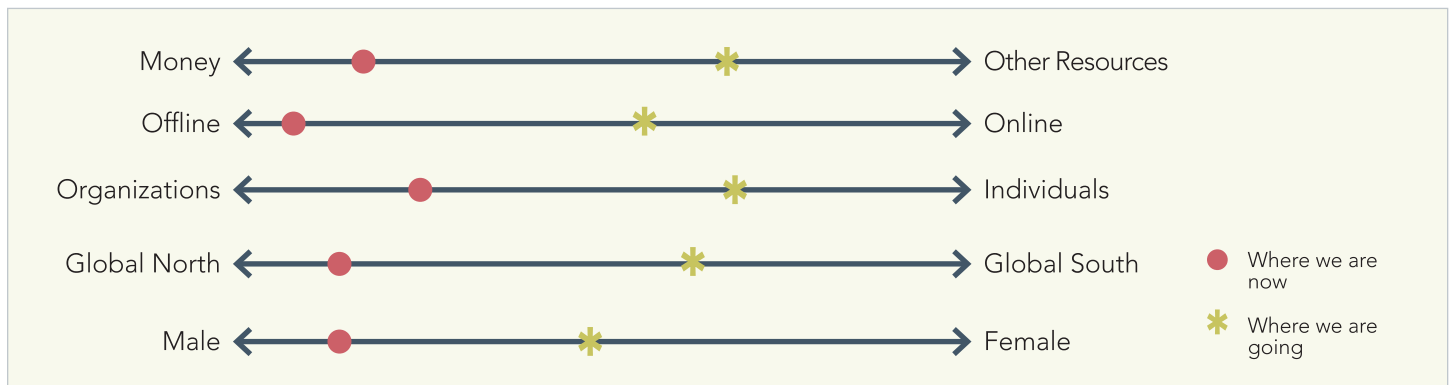
WMF Grantmaking also includes Travel and Participation Support⁹ which supports active participation of Wikimedians in mission-aligned events. In addition, WMF offers Scholarships to the annual Wikimania Conference and Partnership Grants to support allied organizations that partner with Wikimedia communities in expanding reach and participation, particularly in the Global South.¹⁰

The WMF grantmaking process is founded on the WMF's Guiding Principles¹¹, and is based on many norms that are part of most Wikimedia communities (also referred to by interviewees as "the wiki way"). These are: Freedom and open source; Serving every human being; Transparency; Accountability; Stewardship; Shared power; Internationalism; Free speech; and Independence.

The Wikimedia Foundation uses a variety of participatory grantmaking methods across its grantmaking programs. Grantmaking decisions about which proposals to fund and how much funding to offer are made publicly on wikis, in cooperation with volunteers and Wikimedia organizations. WMF grantmaking staff also participate in the execution and analysis of grant-funded projects by providing mentorship and guidance to grantees, connecting them with like-minded individuals and organizations, and by helping them spread awareness of their work through blog posts, learning patterns¹², and case studies.¹³

At this time, WMF is in the process of shifting its support models, including the following changes, in alignment with WMF values and WMF's strategic plan:¹⁴

- From primarily providing support through funding to providing a range of support and resources, including mentorship, training, and tools, in addition to funding.
- From primarily funding established organizations, to funding more small groups and individuals.
- From primarily funding grantees in the Global North, to funding and intentionally developing communities in the Global South.
- From a male-dominated culture, to funding programming that increases participation and representation of women and trans people.



Above image from *Grantmaking Overview, June 2014*.

⁹ Travel and Participation Support is reviewed by a three-member committee consisting of staff from the donor organization. Wikimania Scholarships are reviewed by a nine-member committee of volunteers. Partnership Grants are reviewed by a committee of two staff and two volunteers.

¹⁰ 2014-15 Wikimedia Foundation Plan. Page 16. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/foundation/e/e0/2014-15_Wikimedia_Foundation_Plan.pdf

¹¹ https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Resolution:Wikimedia_Foundation_Guiding_Principles. Approved by Board of Trustees on May 30, 2013.

¹² https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Learning_patterns

¹³ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Start/Approach#approach1>

¹⁴ Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bc/Grantmaking_Overview_for_Lila_June_2014.pdf

WMF Grantmaking Programs

	Individual Engagement Grants	Project and Event Grants	Annual Plan Grants
Mission	Comprehensive support for individual and small team projects focused on online impact.	Funds for organizations, groups, and individuals organizing events and running primarily offline projects that benefit the Wikimedia movement.	Funding the annual budgets and mission objectives of Wikimedia affiliate organizations. The only WMF grants program designed to fund full time, permanent staff.
Committee Name	IEG Committee (IEG Com)	Grant Advisory Committee (GAC)	Funds Dissemination Committee (FDC)
Target Market	Funds for individual or team of up to four individuals	Individuals, groups, organizations	Organizations
Proposals accepted	Proposals accepted twice annually.	Proposals accepted at any time.	Proposals accepted twice annually.
Project timeline	Up to six months, with potential to renew for six more if need is shown.	Grant periods should not exceed twelve months, as a rule. Exceptions will be considered when a justified context can be shown.	Annual – 12 months.
Number of Committee Members	17	28	9
Who has final decision?	Staff with recommendation of Committee	Staff with recommendation of Committee	Board approved recommendation of Committee
Maximum Request	\$30,000	None; most requests are under \$50,000	None
Minimum Request	None	\$500; exceptions may be considered	None

As this chart demonstrates, WMF grantmaking has three primary programs which make grants in a range of sizes to a diverse spectrum of individuals, groups, and organizations. Each grantmaking program has a committee of volunteers who advise the grantmaking process. In the case of the **Individual Engagement Grants** and **Project and Event Grants**, the staff has final decision.

IEG and PEG applicants create a proposal page on-wiki using either a Form Wizard¹⁵ or standard wikimarkup. Proposers also have the option to start their pages as smaller ideas in an incubation space called IdeaLab¹⁶, and collaboratively grow them into full proposals over time. Once opened for review, the entire Wikimedia community is invited to endorse proposals or discuss any concerns or questions they have on the “discussion pages” of the proposals. Next, the Committees review proposals, provide feedback, and recommend a shortlist of proposals for WMF to fund. Finally, WMF staff complete due diligence on the committee’s recommended shortlist, including interviews of the applicants by the program officer. WMF finalizes the selection of grantees in discussion with the committee.

¹⁵ <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Meta:FormWizard>

¹⁶ <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:IdeaLab>

The **Funds Dissemination Committee (FDC)** is considered a special advisory committee of the WMF Board. The FDC makes recommendations on grants, based on the Annual Plan Grant proposals to the WMF Board. The WMF Board approves all funding decisions, which are then implemented by staff, on the basis of the FDC’s recommendations. Staff do not have a direct role in the decision-making process beyond due diligence in the form of the Executive Director’s certification. FDC members also play an important role in communicating funding decisions to the wider movement.

Applicants begin the APG proposal process with a Letter of Intent. Organizations must meet eligibility requirements to apply, including formal recognition as a Wikimedia organization (unless exempted by the WMF Board), and completion of WMF grants and/or payment processing as well as compliance with any agreements with WMF.¹⁷ Proposals, including links to annual plans and budgets, are publicly available throughout the process, and the public is explicitly invited to comment on proposals for a 30-day period following the proposal submission deadline. Staff compile input from experts and members of the community and publish public assessments of each proposal. The FDC gathers for a four-day meeting in person, and publishes recommendations to the WMF Board of Trustees.¹⁸ The WMF Board makes the final decisions about Annual Plan Grants, and has the power to reverse or change the FDC’s recommendations. Two Board representatives participate in FDC emails, calls, and in-person meetings.¹⁹

Wikimedia Foundation	Individual Engagement Grants	Project and Event Grants	Annual Plan Grants
IdeaLab	Yes	Yes	No
Form Wizard	Yes	Yes	No
Scoring Rubric	Yes	Yes (New)	Yes
Volunteer Committee Eligibility	All eligible Wikimedians may apply.	All eligible Wikimedians may apply.	Eligible Wikimedians 21 years or older may be elected or appointed.
Volunteer Committee Membership	1-year membership term, renewable with active participation.	Membership is ongoing, with active contribution.	2-year membership term, renewable by community election or re-appointment.

¹⁷ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/Eligibility>

¹⁸ https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/Proposal_process

¹⁹ The WMF Board of Trustees was formed in 2003 with three Trustees, and since 2008 has seats for ten Trustees. This includes one founder’s seat; two seats selected by the Wikimedia chapters; three seats elected directly by the Wikimedia community; and four seats appointed by the rest of the Board for specific expertise

WMF Finances

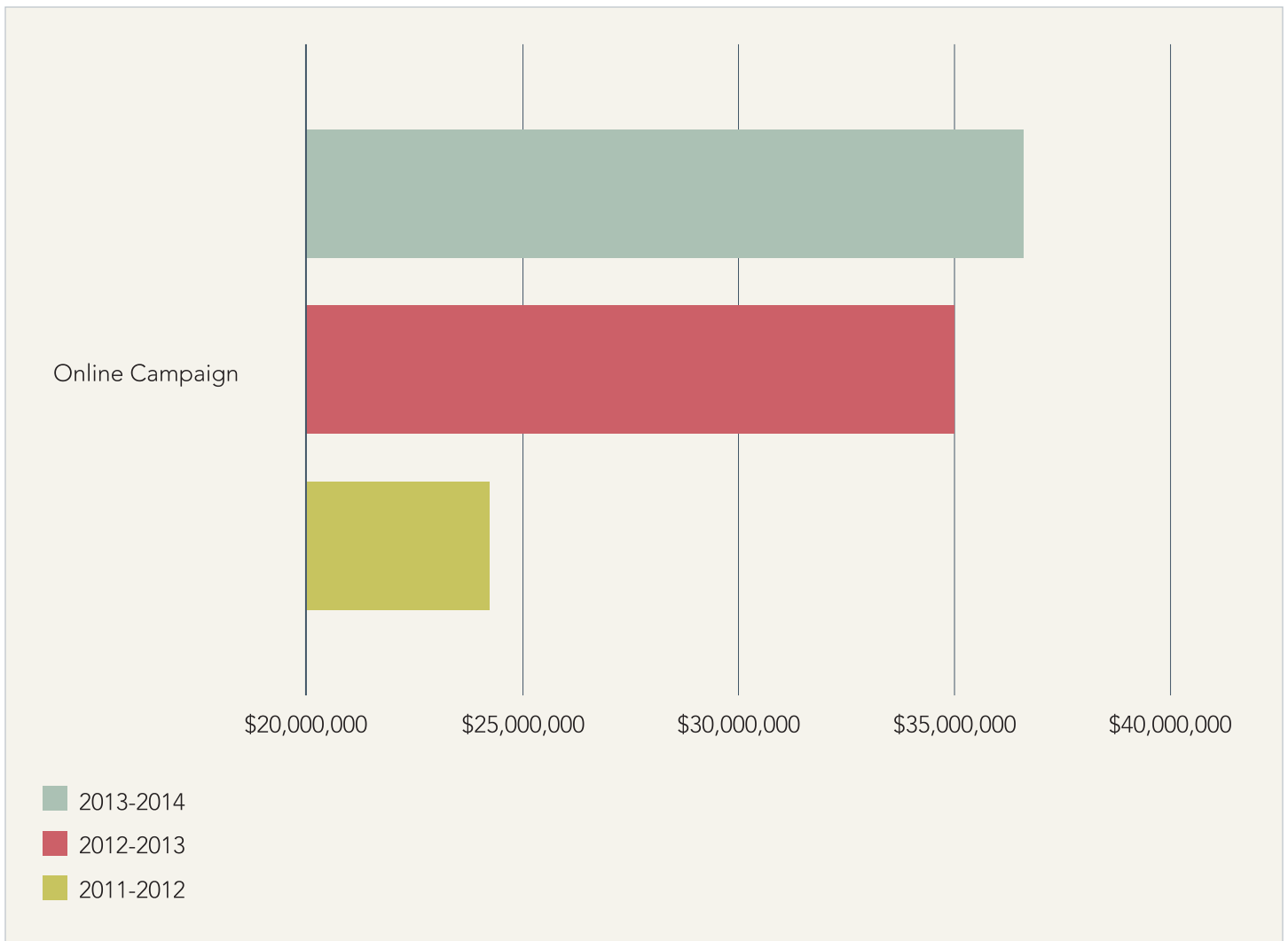
The non-profit Wikimedia Foundation is an “intermediary grantmaker”— a non-endowed organization that raises funds from foundations, individuals, and other sources and then gives funding to other organizations and individuals that work to advance the movement’s mission.²⁰ The role of WMF Grantmaking is to invest a portion of the WMF’s overall budget in a diverse constituency of stakeholders in the movement by finding and supporting projects and initiatives that further the WMF’s mission and strategic vision. Most critically, only 20% of Wikimedian contributions and contributors currently come from the Global South or 80% of the world, and only 1 in 10 contributors worldwide is projected to be female. For the largest free knowledge platform in the world, this implies a significant set of knowledge gaps on Wikipedia and its sister sites that the Grantmaking team is trying to address, in partnership with Wikimedia communities.²¹ In this way, the Wikimedia Foundation’s finances reflect and align with the intentions of the early Participatory Grantmaking movement: a vision of social justice movements funding and supporting themselves, independent of grants and funding from other foundations, states, corporations, or individual people with wealth. For the most part, this vision has not been attained on a large scale by social justice grantmakers, which often struggle to raise their annual budgets or young group of panelists.

Wikimedia Foundation staff and board, Wikimedia volunteers, and Wikimedia organizations work together to find and fund innovative and impactful projects, and to evaluate and share to diversify their funding sources. Wikimedia Foundation is a powerful example of this vision, enabled by the creation of an international infrastructure for free knowledge which is one of the top 10 most visited websites.²²

²⁰ Grantmakers Without Borders. “Working with Intermediaries in International Grantmaking.” http://www.edgefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/intermediaries_presentation.pdf

²¹ https://meta.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:WMF%27s_New_Global_South_Strategy.pdf&page=4
AND http://meta.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Grantmaking_Quarterly_Review,_Sep_2014.pdf&page=6

²² Currently #7. <http://www.alexa.com/topsites>. Retrieved 11.29.2014.



The majority of Wikimedia Foundation annual income is raised through an online campaign supported by individual readers and content contributors.²³ In the 2013-14 fiscal year, WMF raised \$51 million, including \$37 million from over 2.5 million individual Wikipedia readers around the world giving an average of \$15 to the online campaign.²⁴

Funds distributed by the Wikimedia Grantmaking Programs are a small portion of the total annual income, which also supports WMF technical production and engineering, legal advocacy, communications, and all other programs.²⁵ In fiscal year 2013-14, Grants count for 17% of the total organizational budget, with other Grantmaking Program costs at 7% of total organizational budget, compared to Product and Engineering costs which are 43% of the total budget. Fiscal year 2012-13 showed a similar breakdown.²⁶

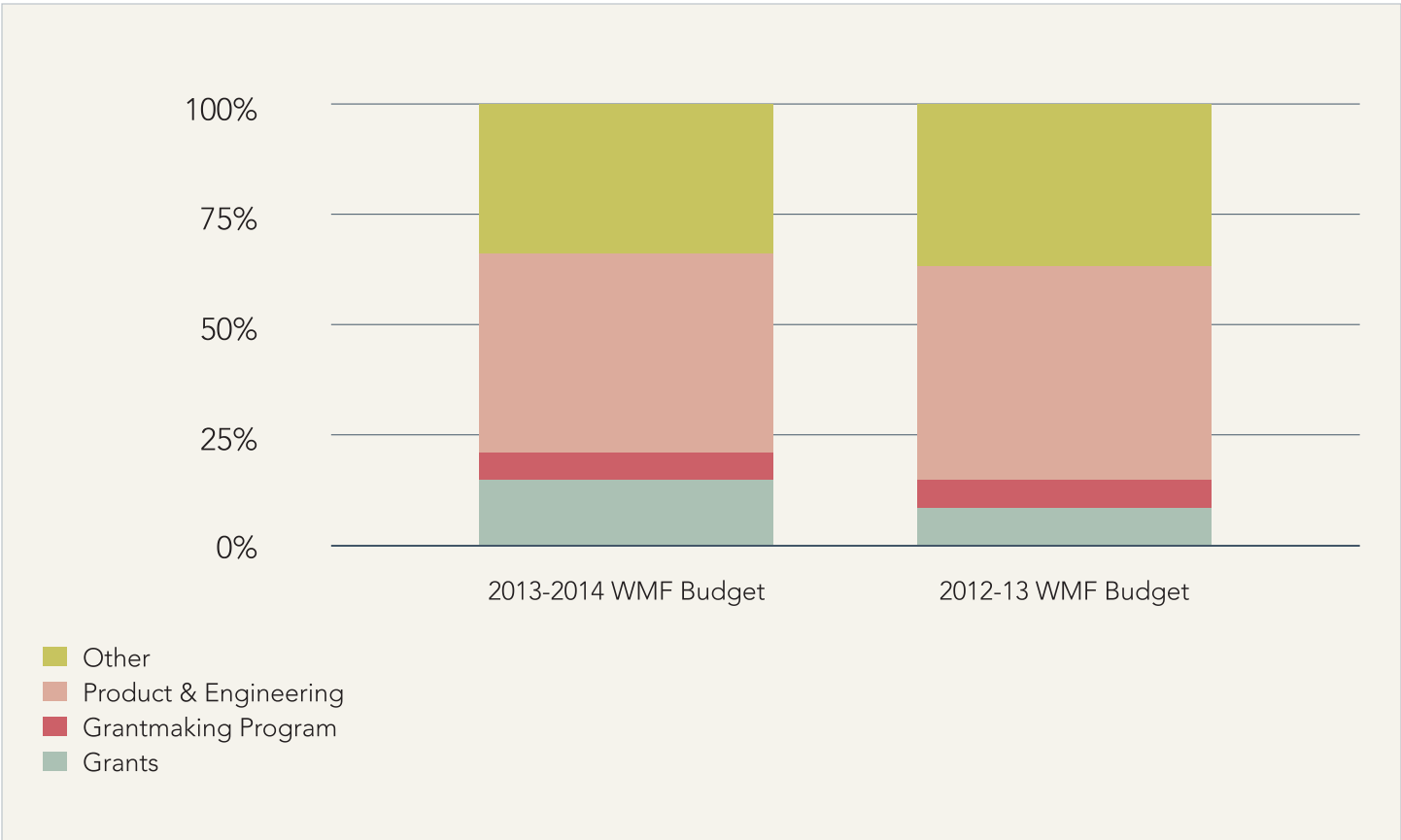
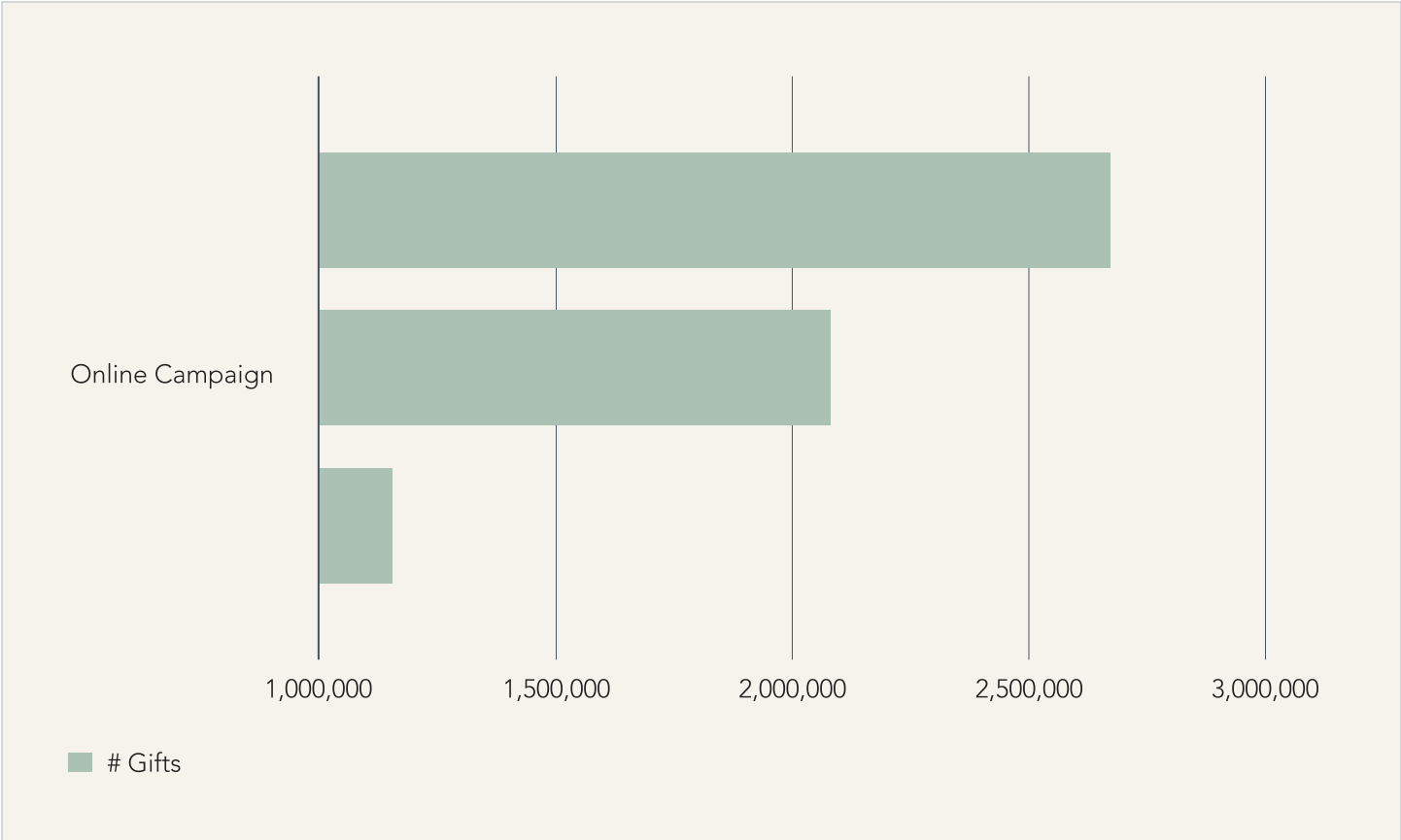
²³ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Start#explore-gr>

²⁴ http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Fundraising_reports

²⁵ 2014-15 Wikimedia Foundation Plan.

²⁶ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/foundation/e/e0/2014-15_Wikimedia_Foundation_Plan.pdf

“Grants” represents all funds to be distributed by the WMF including FDC, Project & Event grants, Partnership & Alliance grants, and Individual Engagement grants, and as well as funds to support the annual Wikimania Conference, including scholarship funding. Grantmaking” represents all WMF staff and resources that support the grant programs, as well as learning and evaluation functions and the Global Education Program.



COMPARATIVE REVIEW

How does Wikimedia Foundation compare to the foundations featured in our “Who Decides” report?²⁷ What are the operational consistencies and variations? In the following sections, we explore both the statistics and the narrative feedback we received about the WMF model, including benefits and challenges of the current methodology.

First, we found that Wikimedia Foundation grantmaking is the largest known Participatory Grantmaking Fund. WMF Grantmaking exceeds any of the eight funds documented in the “Who Decides” report.

In our original study, which did not include the WMF, the highest documented grantmaker budget was \$2.37 million in 2012. In sharp contrast, the Wikimedia Foundation 2014-15 grantmaking budget is over \$7 million.²⁸

While Wikimedia Foundation gives much more money than most other participatory grantmakers, it receives a relatively low number of proposals.

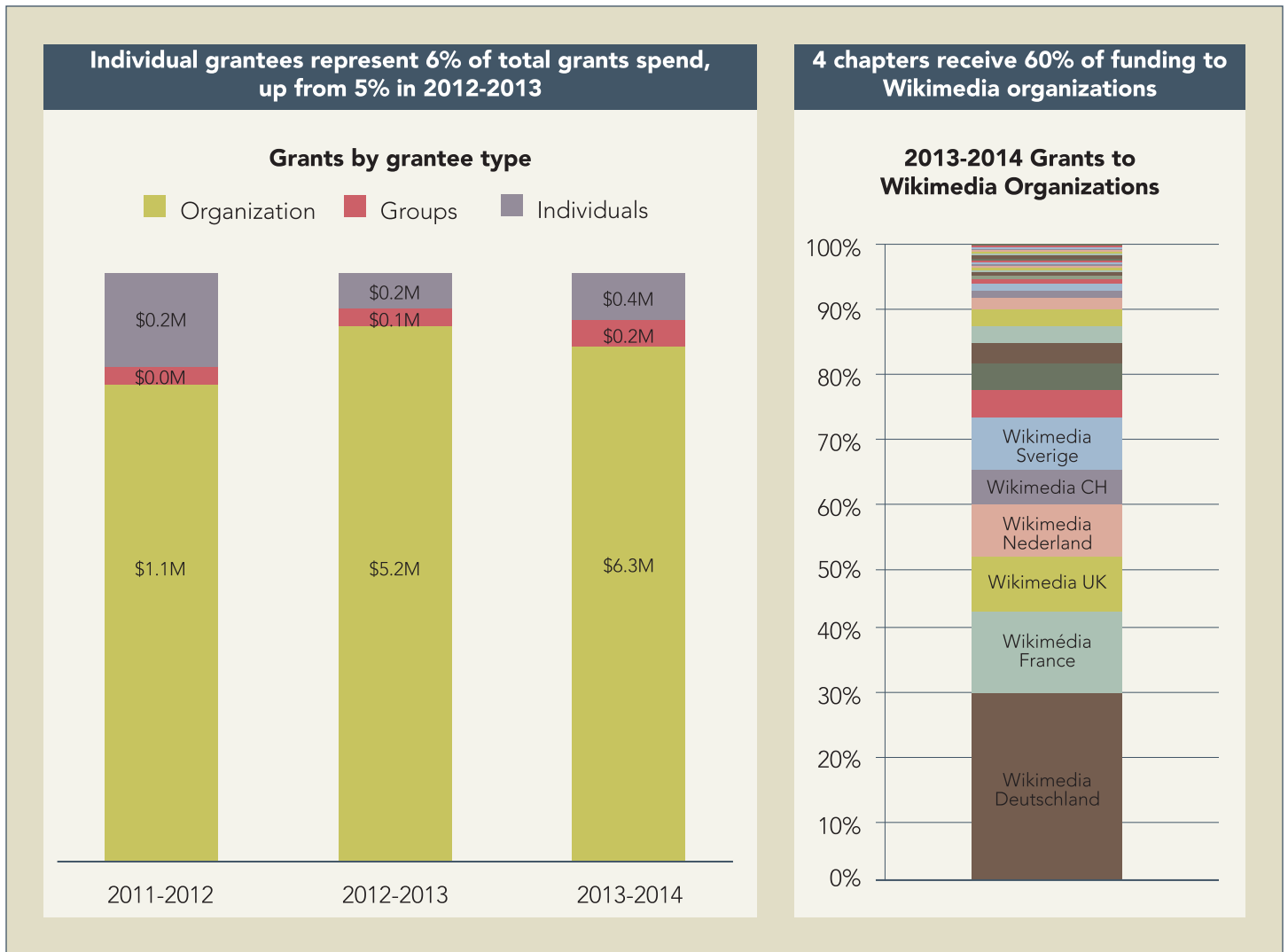
Wikimedia Foundation	Individual Engagement Grants	Project and Event Grants	Annual Plan Grants	Total
2014-2015 Proposed Budget	\$400,000	\$1 million	\$6 million	\$7.4 million
2013-2014 Budget	\$200,000	\$700,000	\$6 million	\$6.9 million
Median Grant Size 2013-2014	\$7,865	\$9,860	\$276,000	\$7,865 IEG \$9,860 PEG \$276,000 APG
Number of Grants Awarded 2013-2014	18	54	15	87
Number of Proposals Received 2013-2014	57	67	17	141
Number of Proposals Received 2012-2013	22	50	15	87
Total # of Proposals Received (Last 3 Fiscal Years)	69	184	30	283
Total # of Grants (Last 3 Fiscal Years)	27	148	26	201

²⁷ <http://www.thelafayettepractice.com/reports/whodecides/>

²⁸ Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. Page 5.

In 2012, with 7 of 8 surveyed funds reporting, the grantmakers featured in “Who Decides” received a range of 64 to 1,146 proposals, with a total of 4,008 proposals. In contrast, in that same year the Wikimedia Foundation received only 87 proposals. In 2013, the number rose to 141.²⁹ Even across the past three fiscal years, total number of Wikimedia Foundation proposals received and grants made are comparatively low.

The disparity in ratio of dollars given to number of requests received is explained by a few outlying grants to large Wikimedia organizations. In Fiscal Year 2013-14, Wikimedia Foundation distributed a total of \$6.3 million in Annual Plan Grants to organizations, of which 60%, or \$3.78 million, was distributed to the largest four Wikimedia Chapter organizations.³⁰



Above image from Grantmaking Overview, June 2014.

²⁹ Survey results. 2012: 39 PEG, 14 APG; 2013: 67 PEG, 57 IEG, 17 APG.
³⁰ Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. Page 18.

If the largest organization, Wikimedia Deutschland, is removed from the survey sample, the median budget of the other 13 organizations funded by the Annual Plan Grant is around \$215,000.³¹ If the Annual Plan Grants were removed from the survey altogether, Wikimedia Foundation would measure very similarly with the sizes of the other foundations we analyzed.

The Wikimedia Foundation has proven a powerful capacity to effectively steward an innovative Participatory Grantmaking model, with a very large budget, diverse volunteer committee structures, and a wide range of applicants from individuals to large, formal organizations.

Wikimedia Foundation Operations Align with a Flexible and Diverse Model

The eight funds surveyed for the original “Who Decides” study represent a sample of international Participatory Grantmaking Funds, illustrating the considerable variation among funds using peer review as a method for dispersing grants. Wide variation within overall budget size, grantmaking budget totals, geographic focus, and funding priorities demonstrate diverse applications of the PGF model. We also found great variation among some of the processes the funds used to do their work, including: frequency of reassessing funding priorities, size of peer review panels/committees; and the gender, age and geographic make-up of panelists/committee members.

Despite the diversity of the groups featured in “Who Decides,” we also found many strong similarities between them.

Most importantly, Wikimedia Foundation aligns with the groups included in the “Who Decides” Report along the most essential quality of a Participatory Grantmaking model: Grantmaking Panelists/Committee Members are made up of individuals directly impacted by, or program clients of, the applicants they review.

The Wikimedia Foundation also aligns across many attributes with the majority (88% or more) of the other Participatory Grantmaking Funds we analyzed.

For example:

- Funds have stated funding priorities.
- Funds have a written conflict of interest policy.
- Funds reported that their organizations are fiscally sound.
- Funds reimburse panelists for travel costs.
- Funds do not have an endowment.
- Funds follow up with grantees via interim reports and/or phone calls, and also follow up with site visits, technical assistance and other types of ongoing communications. For Wikimedia Foundation this also includes virtual meetings and video conferences, connecting grantees to resources, mentoring grantees in programmatic expertise areas, and providing support with project evaluation.

³¹ Average is about \$300,000. https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/FDC_portal/FDC_recommendations/2013-2014_round1, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/FDC_portal/FDC_recommendations/2013-2014_round2.

³² We did not receive feedback from WMF staff regarding the age and geographic distribution of WMF committee members. Staff report that 23% of committee members are women and 77% men.

- We found no cohesive trend in changes in staff size over the past three years: 38% of respondents reported staff had grown, 38% reported staff had stayed the same, and 25% reported decline in staffing numbers. WMF grantmaking staff has increased, due to introduction of new grantmaking programs.

WMF also diverged from the majority of the other analyzed funds in a few key ways. Many of these are due to WMF being a much larger organization than the other funds we studied, with major program areas beyond grantmaking.

- As discussed previously, both WMF overall organizational budget and total annual grant amount are significantly higher than all other organizations we analyzed.
- The funds featured in “Who Decides” reported granting predominantly to small organizations with annual budgets of less than \$75,000. While the Annual Plan Grants are much larger than this, WMF’s IEG and PEG programs align more closely.
- “Who Decides” respondents showed grant sizes ranging from \$500-\$54,000 with a median grant of \$15,000 across three fiscal years.³³ In contrast, across the past three fiscal years³⁴, WMF grant sizes have ranged from \$105 to \$1.79 million with median grant sizes ranging between \$7,865 and \$276,000 in FY 2013-14.
- Most funds have term limits for their grant review committee members/panelists. At WMF, the FDC has a renewable two-year term, and the IEG Committee has a renewable one-year term. The GAC does not have a term limit.
- While on average, 61% of the budgets of the “Who Decides” funds go directly to grantmaking, for WMF as an overall organization, the number is much smaller - projected at 17% in FY 2013-14. This is, of course, due to the many other programmatic priorities of the WMF, including high product and engineering costs. However, if we assess the grantmaking budget alone (total grant amounts plus total grantmaking program costs for FY 2013-14), we find that 72% of funds go directly to grants.
- Of the eight “Who Decides” funds, 75% reported average Peer Review Panel/Grantmaking Committee size of up to 30 people. As of June 2014, WMF Grantmaking had 17 IEG Committee members, 28 Grant Advisory Committee members, and 9 Funds Dissemination Committee members. While these numbers align with the other participatory grantmakers, WMF grantmaking processes also include open comment periods, and as of December 2014, over 1,500 unique Meta-wiki users have contributed by submitting requests, commenting, editing, etc.³⁵
- The other funds we analyzed have small staff sizes, ranging from 2 to 6 full-time equivalents. WMF has about 230 employees and independent contractors, overall.³⁶ The Grantmaking team includes 4 Program Officers, a Grants Administrator, and the Director of Grantmaking, with programmatic support from other staff.³⁷

In the other areas of variation between WMF and the other funds we looked at, the difference is tactical - a reflection of the specific culture and needs of the Wikimedia Foundation community.

³³ For the last three fiscal years we asked them about (FY 2010-12).

³⁴ FY 11-12, FY 12-13, FY 13-14 (with fiscal years ending June 30). Staff survey results.

³⁵ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/foundation/e/e0/2014-15_Wikimedia_Foundation_Plan.pdf. Page 37.

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikimedia_Foundation#Staff

- In “Who Decides” we found that 57% of all fundraising panels/committees meet annually. At WMF, the FDC and IEG Committees review grant proposals twice annually. PEG work is ongoing, in response to rolling applications.
- In “Who Decides” we found that 57% of all fundraising panels/committees receive applications to review 2 to 3 weeks prior to committee decision-making process. At WMF, this item matches the IEG³⁸ and PEG process, however, because proposals are developed in public, the IEG committee has several additional weeks to read/comment on drafts before formal review begins. The FDC has a roughly 1.5 month process for application review prior to meeting, due to the increased demands of a granting process for large organizational plans with a variety of programs and budgets.
- In a multiple choice question, 88% of funds indicated that they conduct grant panel/committee decision-making in person and/or via email. At WMF, the FDC meets in person, but other committee panels are conducted primarily online via wiki, utilizing the discussion page feature, or through email lists and video calls.
- Most funds (88%) select peer review panelists through an application process. At WMF, committee members are selected through a range of methods, depending on the grant program, including application, appointment by the Board of Trustees, and movement-wide elections.

In general, these results indicate that while Wikimedia Foundation has unique elements of both scale and practice in the field of international Participatory Grantmaking, it is largely aligned with the operational methodology of the wider field.

³⁷ https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Staff_and_contractors

³⁸ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:IEG/Committee/>

DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF THE WMF MODEL

In our research for “Who Decides,” The Lafayette Practice found that Participatory Grantmaking is an effective and impactful strategy for resource distribution. Simultaneously - perhaps more importantly - we found that Participatory Grantmaking is a powerful movement building strategy, increasing movement resources of not only money but also knowledge and self-determination. The core qualities we found to be ingrained in Participatory Grantmaking are a direct match to the values of the Wikimedia Foundation. In the “Who Decides” Report, we focused on the consistent PGF qualities of Innovation & Flexibility, Transparency, Participation, Accountability, Leadership of most impacted, Capacity building, (Cost-) Effectiveness, Increasing Solidarity, Functionality in multiple languages and across complex logistics, and more. Compare this to the Wikimedia Foundation Design Principles:³⁹

- Transparent and Participatory Grantmaking (committees and community)
- Coaching and mentoring our grantee partners
- Deepening our support of emerging and Global South communities, and greater female contribution
- Recognizing differences in contexts and approaches
- Innovating and Experimenting
- Balancing accountability with simplicity and ease
- Seeking good outcomes and high impact

How do these well-matched core qualities and design principles play out in the actual operations of Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking programs?

Innovation, Flexibility, and Experimentation

“Encourage Innovation” is one of Wikimedia’s Five Strategic Plan/Movement Goals, established in 2010. A longer explanation of the intention for 2015: “Wikimedia [will have] processes for research, innovation, and experimentation in service to the Wikimedia vision and [will have] efficient processes for migrating high potential innovations to production.”⁴⁰ WMF’s Grantmaking is one of the most important programs for meeting this movement goal, and its history demonstrates a quickly evolving model with real interest and investment in new ideas that could improve or potentially transform free knowledge content and communities. In 2013-2014, the team was able to fund and facilitate experiments and established programs to individuals, small groups and organizations in over 60 countries around the world, focusing on at least 30 diverse Wikimedia language and issue-

³⁹ Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. Page 7.

⁴⁰ http://strategy.wikimedia.org/wiki/Strategic_Plan/Movement_Priorities#Encourage_Innovation

based communities. This culture of experimentation and innovation yields thoughtful risk-taking, a willingness to make mistakes, and meaningful learning. At the Wikimedia Foundation, all grant proposals, committee and staff assessments of proposals, and grant reports are public. All of these discussions, decisions, and outcomes are available to inform the ongoing movement learning process and program evolution. Asaf Bartov, Head of Wikimedia Grants Program and Global South Partnerships, explained that often committee members will point to prior discussions and ask questions about how a current proposal differs from the ideas that have already been tried, saying “This seemed reasonable at the time, it turned out not to work for reasons A, B, C. We have learned and won’t do it again.”

Siko Bouterse, Head of Individual Engagement Grants, discussed her intention to encourage open-mindedness in the Individual Engagement Grant Committee, noting that committee members take their roles as stewards of the funds very seriously. “It’s safer to say no, to take on a gatekeeping or policing role, when you think of yourself as risk management,” says Bouterse, adding that she intentionally counteracts that impulse, encouraging IEG Committee members to be “experimental and bold.”

Innovation, flexibility, and experimentation are core features of WMF grantmaking, including the organization’s ever-evolving infrastructure.

IdeaLab is one key example, an incubator on MetaWiki for people to turn ideas into projects to improve Wikimedia projects, websites, and communities.⁴¹ Users with a new idea fill out a simple form that populates a page with content describing the problem they are trying to solve, their proposed solution, and other information about their goals and challenges. Collaborators can contribute feedback through the discussion page and through an Endorsements section, collaboratively developing ideas into plans and grant proposals. The IdeaLab also hosts workshops and hangouts to help participants turn their ideas into grant proposals.⁴²

This doesn’t mean that every application gets funded; for instance out of 66 PEG proposals in FY 2013-14, 12% (8) were not funded and 6% (4) were withdrawn.⁴³ Sometimes a proposal is just not ready to be approved. In this case there are a few options:

- A committee may offer partial funding, for instance funding the first phase of a project, with possibility of support for future phases.
- A committee may turn down a proposal, offering clear, honest, and detailed information about the decision.

“The message we want you to hear in a rejection is: You’re awesome. Come back,” says Bouterse.

⁴¹ <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:IdeaLab/Ideas>

⁴² http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:IdeaLab/Events#Upcoming_events

⁴³ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:PEG/Table>

WMF also demonstrates systemic commitment to evaluation of their own experiments and innovations, maintaining a culture of self-assessment, critical thinking, and knowledge sharing within the Wikimedia movement. The Foundation’s Learning and Evaluation team uses both quantitative and qualitative research to measure the outcomes and impacts of grant-funded projects, reporting findings back to proposal applicants, committee members, staff, and the larger community.⁴⁴

Transparency and Accountability

Peer Review, Participatory Grantmaking, is important because it is accountability and transparency, totally in alignment with the Wikimedia values. It’s how a Wikipedia article gets made: everyone looks at it and strolls by and tells you whether it’s right or wrong. It’s a collaborative process of creating — “the Wiki Way.”

— Anasuya Sengupta, Senior Director of Grantmaking

With participation by a large number of people with diverse experiences, Participatory Grantmaking requires a shared understanding and clarity about all parts of the process, which in turn necessitates transparency, accessibility, and authenticity.

At Wikimedia Foundation, the core value of transparency is demonstrated everywhere from the mission of encouraging development of free-content educational resources, to the wiki’s open-source infrastructure, to the publicly available documentation of many internal WMF decision-making bodies.⁴⁵ So, too, are all grantmaking decisions deliberated and documented publicly, with mechanisms for discussing or appealing a decision that is perceived as unfair.

In our conversations with “Who Decides” interviewees, as in our conversations with WMF, transparency correlated to accountability. Respondents spoke about perceived fears that committee members would vote in their own interests, for example prioritizing groups in their own country above other applicants. Asaf Bartov shares that, “Unlike a lot of traditional grantmaking, there are significant ways in which the wider community has visibility, and therefore potentially accountability and oversight, on what gets done. We absolutely appreciate and depend on the fact that we have volunteers paying attention to what we fund.”

Volunteer funding committees and open comment/feedback processes are core functions of that accountability. And the process is complex - committee members and all who give input on the ideas are not only keeping the funding accountable and responsive to the wisdom of the movement, but also serve a dynamic function of filtering the learning from the committee work back out to the

⁴⁴ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Start#explore-gr>

⁴⁵ <https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Values>

movement, increasing the reach and filtration of new movement knowledge generated from the grantmaking process. “This movement is starting to ask itself questions about outcome and impact, and the community members who are part of these committees are our stewards and ambassadors,” says Sengupta, “They make the case for shifts in strategy and paradigm in the broader community, much better and more effectively than [WMF staff] ever could.”

One key area of transparency is the issue of Conflict of Interest. Because participation by active community members - those impacted by the grantmaking areas - is a defining element of Participatory Grantmaking, it's clear that Conflict of Interest is an area of dynamic concern, requiring agile problem-solving and a commitment to transparency and integrity by all involved. In our “Who Decides” Report, 100% of respondents reported having a written Conflict of Interest policy, and many funds reported, anecdotally, that they have moved through multiple policy versions as their peer review methods have evolved. We learned of a wide range of practices in response to these concerns, many of which are documented in the “Who Decides” Report. The WMF also has a Conflict of Interest Policy, with five key guidelines on the disclosure of potential and actual conflicts of interest in requesting movement resources, including grants, staff time, scholarships, trademark licenses, fellowships, employment opportunities, travel reimbursements, and conference resources.⁴⁶

The APG Grantmaking process demonstrates an extremely high level of commitment to transparency and accountability - beyond what we have seen in the wider philanthropic field, or the Participatory Grantmaking Funds we surveyed. Beginning with the open review period for proposals, conversations about which organizations and what amounts to approve for funding are happening in public. Because the movement is relatively well-networked, this means that commenters are often giving feedback to people they know, interact, and work with - and in this way, transparency requires creates mutual accountability between applicants, commenters, and committee members. If an applicant feels that something has gone wrong in the grantmaking recommendations, the APG has both an appeal and complaint process, giving the Board the ability to overturn the recommendations by the committee.⁴⁷

Effective, Efficient Organizing

Those we interviewed for “Who Decides” often referred to anecdotal concerns about the efficiency of Participatory Grantmaking models. With so many people involved, with all of the language differences, background differences, and other unwieldy details of a democratic group process, how can the grantmaking possibly be effective, both in regards to time spent and monetary cost?

“Who Decides” respondents framed efficiency and effectiveness in another light. They pointed out that while having one person make a decision may be faster and require fewer resources, it's not effective if the grantmaking decisions turn out to be flawed or ill-advised. In a Participatory Grantmaking model, the time and cost of proceedings also have added value beyond the strength of the grantmaking decisions: connecting groups, movement building, and increased philanthropic literacy for panelists, which can strengthen their own fundraising, movement building, and leadership efforts.

⁴⁶ http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Resolution:Guidelines_on_potential_conflicts_of_interest

⁴⁷ https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/Appeals_to_the_Board_on_the_recommendations_of_the_FDC

In fact, some of the WMF grantmaking processes are very quick. The PEG has rolling acceptance, and generally comes to a decision within two to six weeks from receiving a proposal. Still, WMF staff clearly echoed a commitment to process and belief that outcomes are strongly improved by taking the time to involve a diversity of thought - inviting not only committees but the entire community to add their voices. “We couldn’t do it any other way,” says Jessie Wild Sneller, Senior Manager of Global Learning & Evaluation, “It’s not just that we would break trust, but we would really break our pipeline of innovation.”

Capacity Building

“Our ultimate goal is not to support great grant writers,” adds Jessie Wild Sneller, “it’s to create and support wonderful, effective projects.”

In our research for “Who Decides,” we found that Participatory Grantmaking Funds (PGFs) seriously invest in capacity building, and that this was a key element of their effectiveness as funders and movement participants. The PGFs offered technical assistance, training, and coaching, which then enabled grantees to both improve and expand programmatic work, and to access additional funding, often from traditional institutional donors.

Since PGF staff do not make grant decisions alone, they have greater ability to work with grant applicants to craft and improve their applications, while staying accountable to the movement as a whole. At WMF, this capacity building includes the wiki grant application “discussion page” and the IdeaLab, which create forums for wide and diverse feedback intended to improve applications and move ideas through to fruition. Other capacity building support includes training or knowledge-sharing facilitation through offering face-to-face learning workshops and trainings, hosting learning-focused video conferences, connecting grantees to resources, mentoring grantees in programmatic expertise areas, and providing support with project evaluation.

At its core, the WMF grantmaking programs are designed to support various constituencies in the movement to create impact that aligns with the movement’s mission. The resulting grant application experience is one of meaningful, engaged partnership, a model which stands out as exemplary within the larger field of grantmaking. Witness this survey response from a Committee Member, speaking about the experience of receiving a grant from WMF:

What set apart Wikimedia grantmaking was the close attention to facilitation, mentorship, end-to-end support, personal growth, project management skills training, reflections on impact built into the process from proposal through final reports, and a community of supportive staff. Receiving a grant from WMF is like being welcomed into a family or a tribe that wants you to succeed.

WMF also serves as a capacity-building resource for volunteer members of the Funding Committees, both as grantmakers and fundraisers. One survey respondent explained, “Being on the ‘other side’ of a grantmaking committee helped me and the Wikimedia chapter I’m a member of to improve our own grants application.” Similarly, Project and Event Grants Program Officer Alex Wang reported that in another survey, GAC members had shared that the committee experience was the only opportunity for them, coming from a smaller country, to have understanding and exposure of the

global picture. “They felt like they could be involved in cool projects, have an impact on where their money was being spent,” says Wang, “I think that’s great and I want to be able to increase positive things they’re getting out of being on the committee.”

Jessie Wild Sneller reflected that there has not been much formalized training for committee members in general, but that is starting to shift:

Anyone relatively involved can be on committee, but just because you edit Wikipedia doesn’t mean you know how to look at a grant proposal. We need capacity-building tools for the committee. We’re now in a place where there’s higher retention rates on committees, and more staff capacity to support committees, so we’re getting into more proactive coaching.

Capacity-building for committee members may also result in members moving from one committee to another. “We have started seeing a sort of pipeline of grant committee members from one program to another” as volunteers gain experience with the consensus-making process and other elements of their role, says Katy Love, Senior Program Officer of the Funds Dissemination Committee. For instance, the FDC currently includes a number of members who were previously on the GAC. Love also sees opportunity to increase the inter-committee and cross-committee “cross-pollinating” learning, however she says the staff are conscious of committee members’ limited volunteer hours.

Another way WMF provides support is through ongoing learning conversations, including online learning modules, blog posts, and more. They host video conference learning series about once a month, with live broadcasts that can be watched on Youtube, and a question and answer period at the end. These are on topics that are specifically requested by organizations or individuals in WMF networks, within the grantmaking ecosystem. Topics range from the “How to get beyond the simple data,” to a how-to on “SMART goals,” to conversations around partnerships with education institutions. Some learning conversations target individuals, some are targeted towards organizations, and many towards synthesis of information - WMF sharing back to committees or grantees about trends they’re seeing, ways they can know they’re being effective in their work. Out of these trainings, WMF is currently also creating a program design toolkit.

Says Siko Bouterse, “You have a vision or a wacky idea, let’s figure out how to facilitate it, turn it into action.” The IdeaLab Mixer⁴⁸ at Wikimania, the annual global movement event, was another capacity-building exercise, bringing together a great mix of people for in-person activities that got them out of their comfort zones, meeting new people, and making new connections. Bouterse loved helping to “matchmake” potential project collaborators at the mixer, saying “It was an in-person analogy of what we’re trying to do online.”

⁴⁸ http://wikimania2014.wikimedia.org/wiki/Submissions/IdeaLab_mixer

CHALLENGES

Research for the “Who Decides” Report identified a number of consistent challenges arising for the international Participatory Grantmaking Funds we analyzed: need to diversify their income sources; the complex logistics of working in multiple languages with limited staff capacity; and significant financial oversight requirements.

At the Wikimedia Foundation, we find echoes of the above concerns, but we found the WMF core challenges to be significantly different. Plainly, where most of the funds reflected in “Who Decides” are challenged to expand their funding beyond a small number of institutional supporters, WMF has a rare capacity to generate substantial income through grassroots fundraising. In the 2013-14 fiscal year, WMF raised \$51 million, including \$37 million from more than 2.5 million individual Wikipedia readers.⁴⁹ As a result, while internal negotiations about budgeting are surely a concern for WMF staff, we did not find significant concern about lack of financial resources, staff capacity, or complex financial oversight requirements. This is especially impressive when we consider the relatively low number of total WMF staff compared to the size and logistical complexity of WMF budget, and the massive scope of international volunteer participation to be coordinated.

Instead, we found that discussion about challenges centered on the logistical complexities of the multiple grantmaking programs, which are all relatively new and simultaneously evolving, and the dynamic challenges of expanding the Wikimedia community to increase participation of women and the Global South. We will explore those issues in this section.

Committee Logistics: Room for Improvement

We heard a theme of concern about how to connect the dots between the most successful elements of the various grantmaking processes, and interest in looking at where elements that work about one program might be applied to another. Though staff reported different opinions on which tools are useful for the varied programs, it is clear that there can be increased ease and participation through further experiments.

For instance, until recently the Grant Advisory Committee (advising on Project and Event Grants) invited feedback solely through free-form comments, as opposed to the IEG and APG programs which have considerably more structured processes, including the use of consistent “scoring rubrics” along with free form comments.⁵⁰ As a result, says Asaf Bartov, comments on PEG grants can range from “bikeshedding”⁵¹ on the minutiae of a proposal (for instance, “the biscuits are too expensive”) to big questions about why a project is necessary.

⁴⁹ http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Fundraising_reports

⁵⁰ http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Fundraising_reports

⁵¹ <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bikeshedding>

Alex Wang also spoke about a need to begin allowing GAC members to provide private feedback, explaining that “Most of the committee members are also grantees, and it’s a very tight community. Some of them have said they don’t want to comment on their colleague or friend’s proposal because it’s very hard because of personal connections.” The IEG process starts with individual polling via the scoring rubric, with results then aggregated, anonymized, and reported back to the committee. Another argument for private feedback mechanisms: IEG Head Siko Bouterse reports that through this, “everyone has a turn and a say, it gets women to participate in a different way.” Katy Love also argues that there is a need for protected space - as the FDC does have - for committee members to make decisions without feeling that everything that they say is going to be made public. One unusual and important step in the process for the APG applicants is that the staff publicly review the proposal and annual plan in the “staff proposal assessment.”⁵² This expert assessment is an input to the committee making the decision.

The GAC program has now recently tested a scoring rubric, and they are adopting it as an internal resource for private commenting, as in the IEG model.

When and how groups meet and work together offline was another item that came up in our interviews. Currently, the Funds Dissemination Committee (for the Annual Plan Grants) is the only committee that holds in-person meetings. The FDC meets in person twice a year for grantmaking sessions that distribute a total of \$6 million, gathering in San Francisco in the Fall and in Europe in the Spring. In the past, the Wikimedia Foundation has also covered travel expenses to gather FDC committee members at Wikimania. Since the FDC has a constantly shifting membership by design, gathering at Wikimania has created an opportunity for intensive orientation, building the committee’s cohesion and their understanding of the FDC decision-making tools. “We’ve realized,” says Katy Love, “that for this funding program, it is critical to invest money in bringing people face to face. It is often a challenge for grantmakers to justify such costs, because what you spend on bringing people together, you can’t spend on grants. In this case, because the grant requests are so large and our committee is so diverse, it’s absolutely worth it to have them discuss, deliberate, and create consensus in a face-to-face setting.” The FDC deliberations are facilitated to create consensus, and use a tool called the “Gradients of Agreement”⁵³ to arrive at funding amounts. Love reports that decisions made in person tend to result in much more committee clarity and shared buy-in, and they are less likely to need revisiting.

With a small number of committee members responsible for such a large grantmaking budget, the Wikimedia Foundation staff are able to justify the travel expenses for in-person FDC meetings. Alex Wang reports that because the GAC is an advisory committee, with final decisions made by staff, there can be a lack of incentive for people to participate. Wang feels there may be room for improvement, “or possibly incentives - such as more formalized skills development training - to make community members more involved.” However, the GAC has 28 members, and approves applications on a rolling basis throughout the year. Also, both the Project and Event Grants program and the Individual Engagement Grants program give in ranges that scale very low — it would be hard to justify flying so many people to meet in person to give out a relatively low amount of grant funding.

⁵² https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/Staff_proposal_assessment_form

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gradients_of_agreement_scale

Beyond the cost of travel, the logistics of bringing a group together become less manageable with larger groups, and staff expressed concerns that some committee members would feel excluded because of not being able to attend in person.

Still, there may be opportunities for increasing offline conversation. Siko Bouterse reports that IEG recently did a conference call for the first time, and the committee loved it, giving positive feedback.

Participation, Representation, and Leadership of Those Impacted

The way we do our grantmaking is parallel to the way we believe knowledge should be created and distributed: by the people, by everyone regardless of who you are, or where you're from. We think that everybody holds a piece of knowledge, and all those things combined create these beautiful collections — like a Wikipedia in hundreds of languages. Similarly, with funding we made a process in which no one person necessarily holds the decision making power, but rather it's a consensus-driven process by the communities that are local, on the ground, working alongside these projects.

— Jessie Wild Sneller

There are many paths to the decision-making table at Participatory Grantmaking Funds. In our “Who Decides” study, 75% of survey respondents said that their panel members include “individuals directly impacted/program clients;” 38% listed Funders or Foundation Staff, Program Staff, and Program Volunteers as panel members; and 63% said that panel members are “Other,” describing Other as Community Leaders, Scientists, and Activists (with issue-based and/or regional ties). Peer Review panelists’ gender makeup, age range, disability, and geography of origin all varied widely within the survey, correlated to the specific focuses of each fund. For instance, youth-focused grantmakers make use of a predominantly the impact of the work being done across the movement.

It is the same for the Wikimedia grantmaking. At Wikimedia Foundation, the one key criteria for joining a committee, across the board, is active participation in the Wikimedia Movement. In our survey, WMF staff reported that grantmaking committee/panel members are “individuals directly impacted; program clients,” and/or “program volunteers.” Anasuya Sengupta explains “We trust this process because it’s not one single person sitting in his backyard with his dog, reading proposals... It is a highly opinionated, highly diverse, highly complex set of communities — all of them volunteers.”

All of the WMF materials, and all of our staff interviews, were clear: WMF prioritizes addressing gaps in participation by women and people in the Global South. However, TLP researchers were surprised to find that in our survey of committee members, those concerns ranked at the bottom of the priorities list in survey responses. In our survey, 25% of respondents ranked “Increase participation in the Global South” to be a 1 or 2 on the scale of 1-5 with 5 being most important. For “Decrease the gender gap,” 32% chose a 1 or 2. While this survey doesn’t represent the opinions of all committee members, it did raise a question for us: are the committee members truly on the same page as WMF staff about organizational priorities? Is more committee training necessary in order to achieve the organizational goals?

Staff also reported that 23% of committee members are female, and 77% male.⁵⁴ While this number clearly reflects unequal gender representation, it is an improvement from the gender-gap in the overall Wikipedia editor community⁵⁵ — one of the representation issues that Wikimedia Foundation seeks to address in its funding.

WMF is committed to having a diverse population editing, a diverse amount of content, and diverse readership. This means targeted grantmaking priorities to increase the community of editors, the content, and the readership in alignment with WMF goals. Staff know that meeting the strategic goals will require significant cultural and structural shifts at Wikimedia Foundation and throughout the movement. Meeting the organizational goals will require expanding the community to welcome new contributors who don’t share same the technical or cultural backgrounds of those already present, says Anasuya Sengupta, “in a way that continues to keep our values, and does not get us co-opted.” She continues, “What does it mean for the Wikimedia community that has largely been self-propelled and self-organized from the Global North - primarily the US and Europe - to see itself as being facilitators of a truly empowered emerging conversation in the Global South? How do people step in, step back, step away, step sideways? How do you share power in a way that truly can be transformative?”

While the strategic plan has a 2015 benchmark goal that 54% of visitors to Wikimedia projects will be in the Global South⁵⁶, the bigger work of these cultural shifts will likely be a long-haul process. Sengupta reflected that “Community change and cultural change are very, very difficult to do, and they happen on a different timeline than technological change.” This point is illuminated by comments from Katy Love about the ways Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking will need to adjust to engage with innovation coming out of the Global South. Love reports that Wikipedia use in the Global South tends to vary from other regions in terms of how people access Wikipedia, how the content is created, and the kind of communities being created. And, in order for the Foundation to fund programs in the Global South, there must be Wikipedia communities - individuals and organizations - to make proposals. “We’re really being very careful about not going in and setting up our own programs and then hoping that the community will follow,” says Love, “We’re trying to fund indigenous efforts, but we must first find them and help seed their work, and then help to expand and grow it.”

⁵⁴ Staff survey results.

⁵⁵ A 2011 Survey showed that only 9% of editors were women, and 1% identified as Transgender. Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. Page 23.

⁵⁶ http://strategy.wikimedia.org/wiki/Strategic_Plan/Movement_Priorities#Increase_Reach

Scaling Up: Where to From Here?

Many of our conversations with WMF staff came back to the value of how to intelligently, thoughtfully “scale up” the Wikimedia movement, and specifically how to identify, support, and promote “projects that provide opportunities to reach the Wikimedia movement’s goal of spreading participation in free culture across boundaries of language, gender, and geography.”⁵⁷

There are significant logistical challenges to this work, common to the field of international philanthropy. For instance, the basic issue of how to coordinate communication across so many time zones. The Foundation faces complicated dynamics regarding how to distribute funds across so many different currencies and varied economic scales, and a range of grantees including individuals and small groups or organizations that often do not have nonprofit status or other formal registration. “We have to push against a mythology - among many people who don’t live and breathe and work within the international grantmaking space - that giving small amounts of money to individuals is easy to do,” says Anasuya Sengupta, “It’s the hardest thing to do, the most expensive.” There are also some extraneous limitations regarding international funding, for instance US Government restrictions on funding in Iran.

Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking is also evolving to consciously challenge a perception that individuals will receive small grants, groups will receive medium grants, and the largest organizations will receive the largest grants. This may often be the case, but it should not create a limiting structure, says Sengupta. She explains that it must be made clear that there are multiple points of entry to the pipeline of ideas and initiatives: “You start with the beginning of an idea, an experiment, then you realize that experiment. It becomes a fairly well designed project. Then it can scale, and you want to put a whole lot more resources behind it? That gets the large grant. It should not matter at that point if you’re an individual, an informal group, or you’re an established organization.”

There is also an ongoing discussion about how the grantmaking process can become more proactive, rather than only responding to proposals that come in. Staff spoke of possible future strategies of explicitly inviting specific submissions, either on an individual basis or through calls for proposals, and the possibility that Wikimedia might one day consider funding more aligned work outside of the Wikimedia movement.

⁵⁷ <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Start#explore-gr>

CONCLUSION

The organization needs to understand we are shaping the movement over time, not through carrot and stick approach, but through negotiation. It's hard to document that you're trying to drive a super tanker when you're not at the helm. We're all bending and shaping towards a common direction, based on shared values and trust.

— Garfield Byrd, Chief of Finance and Administration

The Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking programs, structures, and processes have developed through emergent design, both responding to and stimulating an evolving clarity about the needs of the Wikimedia movement. The Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking is relatively new, with less than five years of overall development, yet it has already proven to be groundbreaking and innovative in the field of participatory grantmaking, with capacity to effectively steward a very large budget, diverse volunteer committee structures, and a wide range of applicants from individuals to large, formal organizations.

At the same time, this study finds that the organic evolution of WMF has yielded a structure that is clearly aligned with the comparative operations of others in its philanthropic field. Procedures, statistics, and organizational culture at WMF reflect values and behaviors shared by the funds we analyzed in the “Who Decides” report.

This study represents the first full survey of grantmaking at the Foundation. We found that the Wikimedia Foundation staff and the Foundation’s Participatory Grantmaking practices enable a truly responsive, exciting, and dynamic movement.

WMF has the largest grantmaking team of any of the funds we have studied to date, by far the largest grantmaking resources, and a deeply shared sense of purpose, innovation, and movement development. With a rare capacity to fund, nurture, and elevate the movement’s best ideas, leaders, and practices, WMF holds much promise for sustainability as a truly trailblazing institution.

Moreover, the Foundation has proven that it can make the real structural, developmental, and innovative changes that will be necessary in the ever-changing landscape of a quickly-evolving platform and field. We found that the team shared a sense of priorities, had clarity in their work, and were deeply connected to the needs, trends, and opportunities in the field. The Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking programs are a powerful example of participatory grantmaking, harnessing and catalyzing the power of an international movement for the sustainable development of world-changing open spaces for free knowledge.

APPENDIX

What is The Lafayette Practice?

The Lafayette Practice (TLP) consists of long-time collaborators, senior executives, academics, researchers, financial experts, philanthropic advisors, economists, data analysts, and geographers with decades of leadership in the US and internationally. TLP's partners have had an impact on community and economic development, grassroots organizing, advocacy, communications, media and crisis relations, resource mobilization, democracy building, philanthropy, and organizational advancement. Our work is carried out in a manner that is both internally and externally consistent with organizational values, cultural contexts, and privacy and security concerns. TLP synthesizes field knowledge, system analysis, and data to drive the catalytic change needed to thrive in the complex and change-oriented ecology of today's political, funding, and growth opportunity environments.

This report was researched and written by Matthew Hart and Ezra Berkley Nepon.

Acknowledgments

The Lafayette Practice is grateful to the representatives of Wikimedia Foundation and the Wikimedia community we worked with for sharing their time, expertise, and insights with us. Thank you!

Scope of Work

In the summer and fall of 2014, The Lafayette Project (TLP) conducted research to analyze Wikimedia Foundation data and narrative responses in relation to those of the PGF respondents documented in our report "Who Decides: How Participatory Grantmaking Benefits Donors, Communities and Movements."

Matthew Hart conducted and recorded interviews with Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking Team staff in order to collect, synthesize, and reflect on their grantmaking practices. The quotes in this document are drawn from transcripts of those interviews unless otherwise specified. Interviewees from the Grantmaking team for this project were:

- Asaf Bartov, Head of Wikimedia Grants Program and Global South Partnerships
- Siko Bouterse, Head of Individual Engagement Grants
- Katy Love, Senior Program Officer, Funds Dissemination Committee
- Anasuya Sengupta, Senior Director of Grantmaking
- Jessie Wild Sneller, Senior Manager of Global Learning & Evaluation
- Alex Wang, Project and Event Grants Program Officer

TLP examined existing data regarding Wikimedia Foundation grantmaking, including functions, roles, and budgets. This data was provided through an online survey fielded from October 17-30, 2014, and ongoing conversations with staff. The survey consisted of 73 questions designed to scan the field of international Participatory Grantmaking Funds. Program Evaluation Analyst Kacie Harold, Program Officer Winifred Olliff, and Grants Administrator Janice Tud also provided invaluable data and feedback.

In addition, a short survey examined committee members' experiences and priorities. This survey was shared with all grantmaking committee members that review Individual Engagement Grants, Project and Event Grants, and Annual Plan Grants, and received 32 responses by November 11, 2014 - 59% of current committee membership.⁵⁸

Finally, Matthew Hart met and discussed this information in this report with a number of WMF staff in December 2014. Thank you to the following for their time and feedback: Philippe Beaudette, Director of Community Advocacy; Garfield Byrd, Chief of Finance and Administration; Rachel diCerbo, Director of Community Engagement (Product); Quim Gil, Engineering Community Manager (International); Stephen LaPorte, Legal Counsel; Katherine Maher, Chief Communications Officer.

A Need for Comparative Review

Participatory Grantmaking - also referred to as Peer Review Grantmaking, Community Funding, or Activist Funding - emerges from a practice of grassroots activism, with assumed belief that decision-making participation of people impacted by the fund's programs will guarantee that grants are allocated to those most deserving.

Peer review has a long-standing precedent in the sciences and humanities, dating back to the 18th century, but it was only relatively recently adopted as a methodology for making grants to disenfranchised communities. The Funding Exchange and its member organizations first adopted the model in the early 1970's, in the United States.⁵⁹ While Participatory Grantmaking models have proliferated in the US and internationally over the past several decades, there has been little research or documentation to analyze the development and the outcomes of the methodology. The Lafayette Practice believes that Participatory Grantmaking Funds (PGF) represent important evolutions in the form and practice of philanthropy. Moreover, we recognized that institutional donors and practitioners in the field seek documentation and data about assumptions, innovations, and best practices of this philanthropic model. Ultimately, we felt that a comparative operational analysis would help explain and more broadly disseminate these relatively new practices to new settings and new endeavors.

⁵⁸ There are currently 17 IEG, 28 GAC, and 9 FDC members.

⁵⁹ <http://fex.org/about-us/history>

TLP conducted a comparative operational analysis of eight premiere international Participatory Grantmaking Funds, publishing “Who Decides: How Participatory Grantmaking Benefits Donors, Communities and Movements” in April 2014. We found that PGFs present an exemplary and effective model worthy of further exploration, reproduction, and investment. While the PGF model is innovative, it is now building on three decades of experience, experimentation, and learning. We believe the PGF model is an intelligent, scalable, and effective approach.

Our analysis of PGF funds was initiated to compare the operations of the surveyed Funds. We did not attempt to measure or compare the impact of the funding model, but we believe that studying the impact is a necessary Phase Two of this research. With this in mind, TLP offered three recommendations:

- A study of the impact of Participatory Grantmaking.
- A comparative study of PGFs in relation to traditional philanthropic models.
- Creation of a formal network of Participatory Grantmaking Funds.

Funds Analyzed

- Disability Rights Fund. Based in Boston, MA.
- FRIDA - The Young Feminist Fund. Based in London, England.
- GMT Initiative. Housed at amfAR in New York, NY.
- HIV Young Leaders Fund. Based in New York, NY.
- International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC) HIV Collaborative Fund. Housed at ITPC/Tides in New York, NY.
- Red Umbrella Fund. Housed at Mama Cash in Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Robert Carr Networks Fund. Housed at AIDS Fonds in Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- UHAI - the East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative. Based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Research Goals

- Create assessment criteria to describe core characteristics of Participatory Grantmaking Funds.
- Illuminate promising practices and innovations.
- Examine and highlight the unique solutions these funds have developed to address the Participatory Grantmaking model’s operational, budgetary, and administrative particularities.
- Establish baseline for Participatory Grantmaking models that will enable donors to evaluate potential new Participatory Grantmakers for efficiency.
- Assist existing Participatory Grantmakers to understand how they operate within the field.

Committee Member Survey⁶⁰

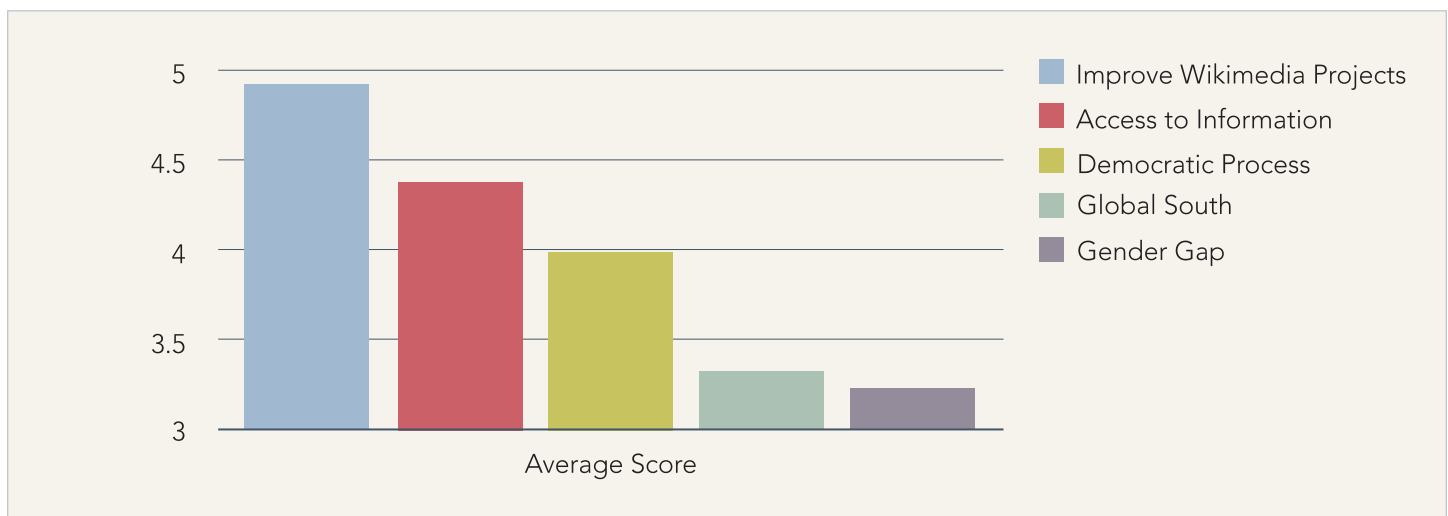
Thirty-two committee members responded to a short survey. Of these, 59% had served on the IEG committee, 34% on the GAC, and 22% on the FDC⁶¹. Six respondents (19%) had served on at least two committees. Three respondents listed additional committees they had served on. These were: Travel and Participation Support; Commission Micro Financement (Wikimedia FR), Community Projekt Budget (WMDE); and Flow Funding (an experimental project temporarily conducted through the Project and Event Grants program).

The majority of respondents (69% or 22) had served on committees for one year or more, and 44% of respondents (14) had applied for, and received, funding from the Wikimedia Foundation. One of the 14 had received a grant but not applied for it, and one had applied but not received a grant.

We asked committee members: “Why is it important to you to participate in Wikimedia Grantmaking participatory grantmaking committees (also known as peer review processes)?” On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest), respondents rated five answers and shared additional feedback through an “Other” option. “Improve Wikimedia projects” and “Increase access to information around the world” were most highly rated.

Other responses focused on learning about and participating constructively in the grantmaking side of the community experience, or on correcting perceived issues. A few examples:

- “Learn more about what elements contribute to a strong grant proposal.”
- “Discuss innovative solutions to interesting problems or challenges.”
- “Improve impact of grants by adding community perspective.”
- “Be aware of what is going on within the Wikimedia movement.”
- “Make sure grants fund projects which are actually relevant to volunteers in the communities.”
- “Provide a different perspective on how grants are used in Africa as well as what must be considered when grantmaking in Africa.”
- “Reduce poorly justified support of vested groups.”



⁶⁰ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1_w2gVzbXYynjnZQ8xlotlMR1hFd_e8azSvEX-nD5yeM/viewanalytics

⁶¹ Of respondents, 19 were current or former members of the IEG, 11 of the GAC, and 7 of the FDC.

WMF Grantmaking Timeline⁶²

The Wikimedia Foundation was founded in 2003.⁶³ Wikimedia Foundation Grantmaking history begins in 2009. Some of the national Wikimedia organizations, or chapters,⁶⁴ began to request funds for costs such as hosting conferences, or buying refreshments for outreach events. Erik Möller, Deputy Director and Vice President of Product & Strategy, was the staff member receiving those requests. As an long time Wikipedian himself, he responded in a “wiki way,” creating a space for grants on Meta-Wiki, with a very short form application, and sending out an email to the main mailing list. “From then on we suddenly had a grants program,” says Asaf Bartov. How were those grants decided? Bartov explains that every now and then, Möller would read requests and approve or reject them - and few requests were turned down. This program changed hands several times, being run briefly by the WMF’s “Program Team” before being shifted to the “Community Team,” and finally to the “Global Development Team,” the predecessor of today’s grantmaking team.

Until 2010, the Wikimedia Foundation was largely focused on technical infrastructure for the websites. The organization’s first ever strategic plan was created and adopted in 2009-2010: “A collaborative vision for the movement through 2015.”⁶⁵ This plan included a number of critical targets, including one to “Support healthy diversity in the editing community by doubling the percentage of female editors to 25 percent and increasing the percentage of Global South editors to 37 percent.” The report also included commitments to “Support Wikimedia chapters with financial or other assistance...” and to “Provide project funding for efforts to connect Wikimedia projects with the work of institutions of culture and learning.”

Still, at that time, funds were being distributed only for technical assistance, reimbursements, some organizational costs, and event expenses. WMF did not yet conceive of its grantmaking as a philanthropic or human rights project.

When Asaf Bartov was hired in 2011, as the only grantmaking program officer, he didn’t feel comfortable being the sole decision-maker about grant distribution; he wanted discussion before decisions. He began to encourage participation on the discussion spaces (talk pages) of grant applications, and established the Grant Advisory Committee (GAC) to advise the WMF on decisions about Project and Event Grants (PEG) (then called “Wikimedia Foundation Grants”). This change in approach marks the point at which WMF became a Participatory Grantmaking Fund. Bartov’s own experience with Wikimedia outside of the US informed his desire to broaden the scope of input about proposals:

I wanted [input from] a broader community voice, people with experience in Wikipedia, people experienced in more than one language. I made sure the inaugural Grant Advisory Committee included people who spoke several different languages, who actively contribute to different language editions of Wikipedia, with different geographical bases.

Bartov made another big change: he opened up the application to the wider community. Whereas previously, the grants process had been designed to respond only to requests from formal

⁶² Based on interview with Asaf Bartov, with feedback from other staff.

⁶³ Following the creation of Wikipedia in January 2001. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wikipedia

⁶⁴ Wikimedia chapters are independent organizations founded to support and promote the Wikimedia projects in a specified geographical region (country). http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_chapters

⁶⁵ http://strategy.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Movement_Strategic_Plan_Summary

Wikimedia organizations, Bartov opened the grant process to individuals and groups that were not technically chapters, everyone except for-profit organizations. Bartov's first year, 2011, was also "the year [the WMF] cracked fundraising," as he puts it, "We have this tremendous asset: we get to fundraise on Wikipedia. Nobody else does. And also, as Spider-Man's uncle says, "with great power comes great responsibility."

In 2012, two major changes happened. At the Finance Meeting in Paris in February 2012⁶⁶, after months of arguments, those present reached consensus to decouple fundraising from funds dissemination. Whereas previously some chapters⁶⁷ had received a portion of the funds raised from Wikipedia banners in their own country or region, from this point onwards, 100% of funds raised from donation banners on Wikipedia and its sister sites around the world (and not designated as being donated directly to a chapter) would be managed by the Wikimedia Foundation, and disseminated according to need. This decision led, later in 2012, to the creation of a second participatory grantmaking body - the Funds Dissemination Committee (FDC) — which distributes Annual Plan Grants (APGs) to organizations in response to applications that include annual budgets and annual plans, and considering each organization's previous work. Designed for organizations with some experience managing funds – an organization must have had two completed Project and Event Grants or an equivalent experience as a payment processing organization to qualify⁶⁸ – APG is the only grants program designed to support full time staff. This change yielded an increase in accountability for the large amounts of funding supporting organizations in the movement, and capacity to shift towards increased funding in the Global South. Senior Director of Grantmaking, Anasuya Sengupta, reflected on this key decision to decouple resource mobilization from resource dissemination,

It was a huge, very radical, political decision for this movement to say very clearly that we know that most of the money right now is coming from Europe and from the US, but we also recognize that the place it needs to go is the Global South and emerging regions and languages, and therefore we are decoupling the two. And we are constructing a committee of peers by which we will do this.

Also in 2012, the WMF Board assessed that the Foundation was doing too many things, and therefore instructed staff to determine core functions, and develop recommendations for "Narrowing Focus."⁶⁹ The result was a decision to focus the efforts of WMF in two main areas: Engineering and Grantmaking. This meant big change, from the recent history of one staff person giving a few small grants to becoming a tech and grantmaking organization. "It's a very significant change," says Bartov, "and it's not complete, it's not part of the DNA of the organization. That's something we are changing internally, advocating for what we do, and why it matters."

The first staff hires had backgrounds that mirror what we heard from the majority of the interviewees in our research for "Who Decides" - staff join an organization because of their commitment to the movement, and then find themselves in grantmaking roles. In contrast, staff joining WMF after the

⁶⁶ http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Finance_meeting_2012

⁶⁷ Chapters that had certain relevant infrastructure including completed incorporation status; bank account; local PayPal account.

⁶⁸ As well as several other criteria for eligibility: <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:APG/Eligibility>

⁶⁹ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a7/Narrowing_Focus_presentation_to_the_Board_%2826_October_2012%29.pdf

“narrowing of focus” shift have necessarily come to WMF with explicit experience in grantmaking — crucial for taking the work of the Foundation to new levels of strategic effectiveness.

In alignment with the WMF strategic goal to shift “from primarily funding organizations, to increased funding for individuals,” in January 2013, the Individual Engagement Grants program was established to support individuals piloting experiments for online impact.⁷⁰

Since the founding of its Grantmaking Programs, the total amount of grants made by WMF has made grants totals more than \$15 million.⁷¹

Key WMF Grantmaking Staff List in chronological order of joining the Wikimedia movement

Asaf Bartov joined as a long-time Wikipedian volunteer, first editing in English at the beginning of the Wikipedia movement, and then in Hebrew when Wikimedia Israel started in 2003. He joined his local Israeli chapter in 2008, and joined the staff of the Wikimedia Foundation in 2011.

Winifred Olliff was involved in grantmaking since 2010 as the Assistant to the Chief Global Development Officer, worked as Grants Administrator for several years, and is now Program Officer supporting organizations receiving grants.

Jessie Wild Sneller joined WMF in 2010 as Special Projects Manager, after her work on the development of the strategic plan as a consultant, and served as Senior Manager of Global Learning & Evaluation until late 2014.

Janice Tud joined WMF in 2010 as a member of the human resources team, and transitioned to Grants Administrator in 2013.

Siko Bouterse joined the Wikimedia Foundation in June 2011, first as Head of Community Fellowships, and later as Head of Individual Engagement Grants.

Anasuya Sengupta joined WMF in July 2012, as Director of Global Learning and Grantmaking, and later headed the department as Senior Director of Grantmaking.

Katy Love joined the Wikimedia Foundation in January 2013 as Senior Program Officer for the newly constituted Funds Dissemination Committee.

Alex Wang joined WMF as Program Officer for the Project and Event Grants Program in January 2014.

⁷⁰ https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:IEG/Learning/Round_1_2013/Impact#cite_note-1

⁷¹ Grantmaking Overview, June 2014. Page 10.



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