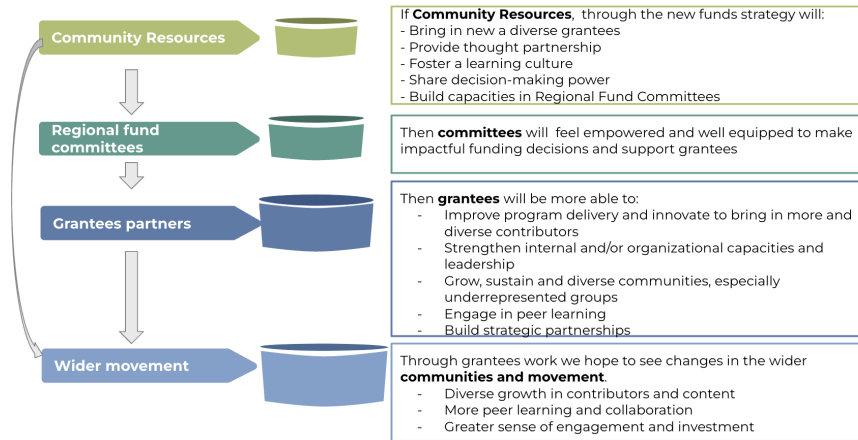


Feedback and Learning Report: Applicants and Regional Fund Community members

Fiscal year 22/23

This is a summary of feedback received from 49% of Regional Fund Committee members and 60% of General Support applicants in the fiscal year 22/23. This feedback process is part of the Community Resources team learning and evaluation framework that seeks to learn from the team’s theory of change:



This executive summary divides the analysis in: 1. what is working well for Regional Fund Committee members and applicants that responded to the survey and 2. where to focus attention for improvement. See *footnotes for data points and some regional variations*.

1. What’s going well and what we can keep doing:

For Regional Fund Committee members (RFC):

- After two years of learning and iterating the funding review process **there is a feeling of increased capacities and autonomy**¹. Better staff reviews and management of the review processes has been key².

¹ **85%** of RFC respondents felt they had the **capacity and autonomy** to make funding decisions. This has increased slightly in the last year, particularly in the LAC and MEA regions. Most respondents feel proud of their role and feel they have built capacities (**89%**). It is important to look at the few who disagree with these statements (mostly in NWE, USCA, and South Asia) to see why this is the case.

² **Over 85%** of RFC value the **documentation and guidance provided by CR staff** for decision-making. 70% recognise that documentation has improved over the last year, but recommend further improvements (e.g.. including support for budget and metrics evaluations, and timely sharing of grantee reporting)

- Year 1 showed the need for **building greater trust** between the Community Resources team, the RFC and grantee partners. There are signs this is increasing through more interactions, better communications and openness to share critical opinions³.

For Wikimedia Fund applicants:

- **Most useful support has been 1:1 conversations and guidance** provided by Community Resources Program Officers⁴. This support as also built trust to discuss sensitive issues or critical views⁵.
- **Continuous conversations** with Program Officers have been useful for grantees to feel that they are supported **during grant implementation**, as well as regional collective learning spaces⁶.
- **More interactions with RFCs** has allowed grantees to feel more trust in their capacities to make funding decisions and their knowledge about grantees' work⁷. Also, increased empathy for their task and the time dedicated to this. Over 50% see this a favorable model to distribute funds fairly in the region, over a global committee or WMF making funding decisions.

What can we improve and where we should focus our intentions:

Regional Fund Committees request:

- More **clarity around overall yearly budgets** assigned by WMF and the rationale behind this⁸.
- Rounds that allow **more time** for reviewing documentation
- **Practical guidelines /benchmarks** around reviewing budgets and metrics⁹

³ **85%** of RFC respondents believe they can voice critical views, showing an increased level of trust and partnership with the CR team compared to previous rounds. However, there are still a few RFC members from LAC, MEA South Asia, that disagree. Half of them were new members.

⁴ **85%** of applicant respondents agree they were given the right orientation and support to apply for the fund.

⁵ **75%** of respondents feel that they can reach out to POs with sensitive or challenging issues and **65%** feel they express critical voices. It is necessary to work with particular grantees to understand why they have this perception and find ways of building more trust and support (particularly in NWE, MEA, LAC, and SA).

⁶ **68%** of respondents feel the support through conversations is very useful. **67%** of respondents feel that the CR team is providing spaces to support collective learning about grantee work in the region.

⁷ **63%** of respondents felt the RFC feedback was fair.

⁸ This was felt particularly strongly in the NWE region.

⁹ **70%** of RFC respondents generally feel that grantees' budgets are realistic and they have the right capacity to implement their work, showing an increased level of trust. The 30% that have a more neutral position or disagree are from ESEAP, South Asia, LAC, MEA, and NWE.

- **Conversations with grantees** earlier in the rounds¹⁰.
- **Time to support grantees beyond rounds** (less than 50% do this). They view this as key to building trust and making better decisions¹¹.
- **WMF to organise learning spaces** between committee members.
- Support to interact with **Movement Strategy spaces** discussing future funding models. RFCs feel they have built capacities to participate more actively, but still desire more empowerment in these spaces¹².

Applicants require from WMF:

- Anticipated communication about dates and requirements, as well as better alignment with affiliates' annual approval processes.
- More transparency around the **criteria WMF uses to distribute funds** to each region and how this ensures equity.
- Clearer budget guidelines
- Better support in the **definition of metrics**. A majority of respondents felt that the metrics they defined were useful and they had the autonomy to define them,, but wanted more guidance and support in data collection. More support is also needed to develop Theories of Change and define Knowledge Gap contributions.
- More contextualised orientation and support from the WMF for smaller groups and newer applicants¹³.
- More capacity-building services from WMF, beyond PO conversations¹⁴.
- **Thematic Funding Committees** for non-regional based proposals.
- Consider the RFC role to not be purely volunteer-based if they are expected to support grantees beyond funding decisions.

¹⁰ Conversations with grantees don't happen in all regions or for all applicants (less so in NWE, SA, LAC, and MEA).

¹¹ Only **44%** of RFC respondents feel that grantees see them as well-informed to make funding decisions. This may be because of criticism received, particularly in some regions (such as LAC and MEA), or because the interaction was low (LAC, NWE, USCA). Greater support between rounds could help change this perception. RFC respondents' support for grantees varies across regions. Generally, the most engaged RFC seem to be MEA, ESEAP, and South Asia, the most common form is participating in peer learning spaces (56%). The least are NWE, CEECA, and USCA.

¹² **81%** of RFC respondents believe that their role is helping them participate in funding discussions and shape future funding models. **70%** believe it is helping them become more active in Movement Strategy (an increase from last year). However many members feel there could be more participation in these spaces, such as interactions with the MCDG. This is particularly true of older committee members from SA, NWE, LAC, and USCA.

¹³ There are opportunities to create more Let's Connect spaces around application support.

¹⁴ There is room for more continuous capacity-building services, beyond the CR team and Let's Connect sessions that involve grantees.

Applicants require from RFC:

- **More structured conversations with RFC** earlier in the rounds and between rounds to support implementation and longer term thinking.
- **Better feedback** from RFCs: **44%** of applicants still say the feedback was not particularly useful for their work. These were applicants from various regions (many from NWE, MEA, CEE, and LAC). 70% were returning applicants and of various affiliate sizes.
- **Better training** of RFC around funding for equity and different affiliate types. This could require bringing in specific expertise into the committees¹⁵.

¹⁵ A number of grantees (many returning + larger and small affiliates and from different regions) feel that RFC should be able to offer expert advice and longer-term thinking about grantees' work and strategic regional perspectives. RFC needs to build the right capacities to make funding decisions for different types of grantees (for instance larger and smaller grantees without structured teams) and to understand investments needed for equity.