



Wikimedia's contribution to the draft Digital Public Goods Alliance Strategy

The Wikimedia Foundation welcomes the opportunity to engage with the draft Digital Public Goods Alliance Strategy. The Foundation is the nonprofit dedicated to encouraging the growth, development, and distribution of freely accessible, multilingual content, and to providing the full content of these wiki-based projects to the public free of charge. The organization hosts some of the world's largest collaboratively edited reference projects, including Wikipedia. In collaboration with a network of affiliates, the Foundation provides the essential infrastructure and an organizational framework for supporting and developing collaboratively curated encyclopedic content and other endeavors that serve this mission.

Wikipedia is the most successful of [multiple free knowledge projects](#) operated by the Foundation. In all Wikimedia projects, the community is a crucial part; without their active participation, the projects would not be able to grow, ensure quality control, or update to reflect current affairs or scientific advances. The Foundation and its projects are part of the larger Wikimedia movement. [This movement](#) has coalesced around collecting and sharing free knowledge with the world. This movement comprises organizations ("affiliates") and thousands of individual volunteer editors. Wikipedia depends on this movement, which has built it to the size of 55M articles across 300 languages. It is great to see the project recognized as a digital public good for all the ways it serves the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we want to point out the dynamic nature of Wikipedia as a collective effort and a living phenomenon that is preserved and expanded by the participation of the community as a whole.

Participation in Wikipedia and its sister projects is also multidirectional. On the one hand, it is a platform that allows anyone with the material means to consult the information therein; it awakens people's interest in a particular subject. It also allows people to see as curious observers how knowledge has evolved within the platform through pages detailing article edit histories or discussions by editors. On the other hand, Wikipedia lives and depends on the contributions of volunteers, who edit, review, curate, and even resolve conflicts.

Wikipedia and other Wikimedia's free knowledge projects align perfectly with the objectives and approaches proposed in the Alliance's strategy. The following sections are our comments in

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relation to the proposed approaches and a series of examples that can help illustrate how the strategy's objectives can be achieved.

Comments on the proposed approaches

We believe it is a laudable approach to drive the transformation of policies, practices, and resource mobilization from the highest levels of international collaboration and leadership. However, it is worth cautioning that the digital public goods hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation are not products. This means that for the proposed transformation to take place, it will be necessary to engage the larger Wikimedia community and make them part of the process. In this way, we can ensure the envisioned and successful outcome of the Alliance's strategy.

We are pleased to see that the importance of mobilizing resources is recognized among the proposed approaches. Wikipedia is run by a non-profit organization, which largely relies on donations to fund its operations. Wikipedia is indeed sustained by the people who see this project as a source of knowledge and who actively contribute by generating accurate, reliable, and diverse knowledge, but also by the contributions of many donors that allow it to thrive. It will undoubtedly be an excellent boost for digital public goods like Wikipedia to benefit from creating and implementing new funding and support structures that ensure their independence.

Examples of how to achieve the proposed objectives

Last year, the Wikimedia Foundation joined the Inter-American Development Bank-led [21st Century Skills Coalition](#), which aims “to support the implementation of a new generation of education and training policies in Latin America and the Caribbean.” The way Wikipedia and its sister projects work, relying on a worldwide network of volunteers who continually create and verify content, facilitates the development of critical 21st-century skills like digital and media literacy. This partnership offers the possibility of connecting the Wikipedia community with the Latin American and Caribbean educational communities to respond to critical learning needs when digital skills have become more necessary than ever. In addition, this partnership with a multilateral, regional development bank illustrates how to implement objective 2 of the draft strategy through an initiative that effectively promotes and supports the adoption of digital public goods.

The digital public goods are there to be repurposed and adapted according to identified needs and all that is required is a little creativity and knowledge but, above all, intention. That's what data journalism is doing with [Wikidata](#), another of Wikimedia's free knowledge projects, by connecting data stored on the platform with other datasets for [storytelling](#). Stories that, for example, [show](#) how women – journalists and experts – have been involved in coronavirus media coverage. There are certainly many ways in which UN institutions, multilateral bodies, public institutions, etc., can use Wikidata to respond to critical development needs to aid in having better understanding of issues and find possible solutions.

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Another activity that shows how Wikipedia has served to build community and share knowledge is the week-long online edit-a-thon on topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), held in September 2020 during the Global Goals Week, called "[Wiki loves SDGs](#)." It aimed to raise awareness of the SDGs using the English Wikipedia. By mobilizing hundreds of volunteers, activists, and citizens from around the world, existing Wikipedia articles about the SDGs were improved collectively. The event, [led by the British organization Project Everyone](#), contributed to democratizing knowledge and educating more people about the SDGs. Plus, it helped close the gender gap of Wikipedia's predominantly male editors, as nearly half of the volunteer editors identified themselves as women. In fact, 5 of the 9 volunteers who won a cash prize for making the most valuable contributions to Wikipedia were women from low- and middle-income countries. We encourage finding more creative ways like this to raise awareness and mobilize citizens on issues that affect them directly.

Local government institutions have also leveraged digital public goods to respond to significant challenges with scarce resources. In Helsinki, the [coordinator of the implementation of the city's climate action plan](#) not only relied on open-source tools to coordinate the plan but also turned to the Wikipedia Finnish community to find a technological solution that would allow for a participatory tool like the one she envisioned. This collaboration built a prototype discussion tool based on [Wikibase](#) software, which runs Wikidata. This is an example of how collaboration between public institutions and the community that understands, contributes to and enriches a common public good can support each other in finding tech solutions to tackle participatory needs.

The more institutions and individuals understand the value of digital public goods like Wikipedia and its sister projects in addressing critical development needs, the more we will see their benefits and the greater their adoption and adaptation by a diversity of public and private stakeholders. In addition, the more skills, understanding, and applications there are of Wikimedia free knowledge projects, the more chances there are to close the [knowledge gaps](#) that still persist in these digital public goods.

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