

# WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY PLAN

## SUMMARY VERSION

In its 2010-15 plan, the Wikimedia Foundation's primary goal is to achieve strong growth in readership, particularly in the parts of the world where the Wikimedia projects have thus far been less successful: primarily, "the Global South."

As a result of this plan, the Wikimedia Foundation aims to achieve 12% growth, serving 680 million people by 2015 (global unique visitors monthly, as measured by comScore Media Metrix). Today, we reach about 350 million people every month. To achieve this goal would mean we'd be reaching 10% of the entire world. The growth would be targeted to break down into 4% (adjusted) growth in the Global North, and 12% (adjusted) growth in the Global South.

The Wikimedia Foundation intends to achieve that growth by carrying out activities designed to strengthen the editing community, in order to fuel the virtuous circle of editing>quality>readership.

The strategy calls for three primary areas of focus. The Wikimedia Foundation seeks to:

1. Build a technological and operating platform to enable it to effectively support and sustain one of the world's top internet properties.

Over the next five years, the Wikimedia Foundation will invest to develop core systems and processes that will enable Wikimedia to keep pace with the needs of a global movement and the evolving technological, cultural and economic environment. This will include improvements to technical performance and reliability, the institutionalization of user-centric feature development, and the set-up of tools to collect and widely disseminate a wide variety of performance data.

2. Strengthen, grow and increase diversity of the editing community that is the lifeblood of the Wikimedia projects.

Over the next five years, the Wikimedia Foundation will aim to help make it easier for new people to become editors, and to alleviate points of stress for experienced editors. This will include supporting the recruitment and encouragement of new editors, developing tools, products and services that foster affiliation and collaboration, funding face-to-face meetings of editors, and supporting editor self-organization in various forms.

3. Accelerate impact by investing in key geographic areas, mobile application development, and stimulating volunteer innovation.

Over the next five years, the Wikimedia Foundation will aim to accelerate impact in a few key areas. We will establish a temporary presence in several high-potential geographies, with the goal of accelerating editor recruitment and self-organization. This will begin in India, Brazil and the Arabic-speaking Middle East. We will also significantly accelerate activities designed to meet the needs of mobile users, with a particular emphasis on those in the Global South. And, we will invest in scalable solutions designed to make Wikipedia available to people who don't have internet access.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **What is the purpose of this meeting?**

This meeting has two goals. 1) To update the chapters on what has happened since last April, including a high-level walkthrough of the gist of the strategy and 2) To discuss the implications of the strategy for the chapters, and how --in light of it-- the Wikimedia Foundation can best support the chapters over the coming five years.

### **How did the strategy project begin?**

In April 2009, the board commissioned Executive Director Sue Gardner to launch the strategy project. The project launched in July 2009, and is scheduled to conclude in summer 2010.

### **What is its purpose?**

The strategy project has two main goals: it seeks to collaboratively develop a five-year strategy plan for the Wikimedia movement, as well as a five-year business plan for the Wikimedia Foundation. There will inevitably be a great deal of overlap between the two documents, but they will not be identical.

### **When will the project conclude?**

The project will wrap up in July 2010. The final deliverables will be presented to the Board of Trustees at its meeting in fall 2010.

The final deliverables will include the five-year business plan for the Wikimedia Foundation, a 30-40 page document that will include goals for the Wikimedia Foundation as well as the high-level plans for achieving them. The other primary deliverable will be a five-year strategy plan for the Wikimedia movement. We don't yet know exactly what the final form of that plan will be; it is currently being written on the strategy wiki.

### **What has happened since the project launched?**

Over the past nine months, more than 950 people have worked on the strategy wiki. That on-wiki work has been supplemented by countless Skype calls, IRC meetings, face-to-face conversations and e-mail exchanges. The work has been facilitated by the Wikimedia Foundation's project team which is led by Eugene Eric Kim of Blue Oxen Associates, a San Francisco Bay Area consulting firm focused on collaborative process. It has been supported by Barry Newstead and others from The Bridgespan Group, a non-profit consulting firm that has provided data and analysis to the project. Since launch, there have been more than 26,000 edits on the strategy wiki resulting in 2,300 content pages and more than 800 proposals in more than 50 languages.

### **Who has provided expertise and advice during the project?**

Over 950 Wikimedians participated on the strategy wiki, representing many different countries, projects and languages. Those people are our best experts, and they did the bulk of the thinking.

Additionally, Barry and his team conducted dozens of in-depth interviews with Wikimedia participants and supporters, as well as external experts. Those interviews are posted on the strategy wiki here: <http://strategy.wikimedia.org/wiki/Interviews>.

Interviewees included Wikimedia Foundation Board members such as Ting Chen and Sam Klein; Advisory Board members such as Clay Shirky, Teemu Leinonen and Achal Prabhala, and Wikimedia Foundation staff such as Frank Schulenburg and Erik Moeller. External experts included people from the Mozilla Foundation, Creative Commons, the GNOME Foundation, the Palo Alto Research Center, the Apache Foundation, WikiHow, Wikia, Greenpeace, Habitat for Humanity, eBay, the Gates Foundation and Global Voices. The project also interviewed internet entrepreneurs in China and India, as well as Chinese bloggers. Also, Sue, Erik and Barry spent a day with Jimmy Wales and Clay Shirky, talking about community health.

**The strategy project included a lot of research and data analysis. What were some of the most important observations and conclusions drawn from the data?**

Probably the most important observation to have emerged from the strategy project is a really simple one: that the Wikimedia projects have been much more successful in richer countries compared with poorer countries. This is generally true by all measures: number of readers, share of available internet audience, number of editors, and number of articles (in the language version most-used in that country).

This is logical, because generally, wealth correlates with a number of factors that would naturally lead to success for Wikimedia, such as high levels of internet penetration, device ownership, literacy, tech-centricity, availability of education, leisure time and lack of censorship. We know that the quintessential “average” Wikimedia editor is a technology-centric graduate student in his mid-to-late twenties. Given that, it shouldn't surprise us that Wikimedia projects perform well in wealthier countries, because those countries tend to have access to mature, well-developed Wikipedia language-versions, due to the high number of editors available to create them. The obvious implication is that Wikimedia needs to refocus attention towards less-wealthy geographies, with the particular goal of recruiting and supporting active editors, in order to support the creation of good, rich Wikipedia language-versions in the languages relevant to those countries.

The project included a detailed analysis of how Wikimedia is performing in different geographies, and an analysis of the potential each offers (as measured by such factors as number of internet users, number of mobile users, projections for future internet and mobile use, the absence of state censorship, etc.). According to that analysis, the highest-potential geographies for Wikimedia include the Arabic-speaking Middle East and North Africa, Russia, Indonesia, India, Brazil, and Turkey. In general, Wikimedia is performing very well in Europe, North America and Japan: there is lots of potential for Wikimedia to perform better everywhere else.

**What other important observations or conclusions came out of the data?**

An important premise is that the Wikimedia Foundation projects are written by volunteers, and the projects will only be good (up-to-date, useful, high quality) if they are supported by a healthy productive group of editors. The analysis shows that, unsurprisingly, large projects tend to be supported by large communities of editors, and small projects tend to have a much smaller editor base. It also shows that the largest projects have editing communities that are slowly getting smaller: this is true of the English Wikipedia and the German Wikipedia. Many other large projects, such as the French, Spanish, Japanese and Portuguese Wikipedias, have communities whose growth has significantly slowed over time. Research and interviews also showed cause for concern about the health of the larger editing communities: there were many indicators that it has become difficult for new editors to join the projects, and that existing editors often feel stressed and discouraged.

We believe that projects at different developmental stages have different needs. Projects that are small (fewer than 120,000 articles) need to focus on rapidly growing their number of editors, in order to encourage the creation of new articles. This argues for efforts to recruit new editors to contribute to the smaller-language-versions that have the highest potential to reach lots of people --- for example, Arabic, Hindi, Gujarati, and Indonesian. Projects that are large (greater

than 120,000 articles) have a different challenge. They need to focus on maintaining a large and healthy community of editors. This is a complicated problem, which requires a multi-layered approach.

**As the strategy begins to be implemented, what role are the chapters expected to take?**

The Wikimedia Foundation believes the chapters are critical to the success of the Wikimedia movement. We believe that the chapters can play an important role, particularly in the following areas: evangelizing on behalf of the Wikimedia projects to the media and general public; staging outreach events designed to recruit new editors, especially subject-matter-experts, “social engineers,” and women; developing content partnerships with galleries, libraries, museums, archives, and public service media; working with experienced editors and other volunteers to support a healthy, productive Wikimedia community; supporting volunteers in their efforts to provide good service and accountability to Wikimedia readers; representing Wikimedia's agenda to policymakers around issues like copyright law, censorship, open access and open standards, and fundraising to ensure the sustainability of the Wikimedia movement.

We also want to acknowledge that chapters currently only exist in a few dozen countries. To the extent that chapters are expected to play a significant role in the future of the Wikimedia movement, it will be important to continue development of chapters where they don't yet exist.

**How will the Wikimedia Foundation support the work of the chapters during the next five years?**

Part of the purpose of this meeting is to discuss that question. The Wikimedia Foundation is currently in the middle of developing its 2010-11 plan, as well as the full high-level plan for 2010-15. Both will begin to be finalized over the next six weeks. The discussions we have here today will be reflected in those plans.

**How does this work fit in with the project that Arne and Jan-Bart have started, “Movement Roles II”?**

At its last meeting, the board asked Arne and Jan-Bart to begin an “organizational development” process aimed at clarifying roles-and-responsibilities inside the Wikimedia movement. (This process is also known as “Movement Roles II,” because some preliminary work was done on the strategy wiki by a task force called Movement Roles.) All of this work --- the consultation here, and the work done during the Arne/JB process, will help shape our collective direction and planning. The Arne/JB work will begin this afternoon, in a session called “Roles in the Movement,” starting at 2.30.

We don't anticipate having trouble keeping the work aligned: Jan-Bart and Arne are on the board, which will receive and approve the Wikimedia Foundation's plans as they are finalized.

**If I have questions about the strategy project after this meeting, who should I talk with?**

If you have questions about the process, please speak with Eugene. For questions about the data and analysis, or about any of the interviews conducted by Bridgespan, please speak with Barry. General questions can be directed to any of the following: board members, Sue, Barry, Eugene, Philippe or Erik. If you're interested particularly in challenges faced by new editors, Frank Schulenburg is always a useful resource.