Wikimedia Foundation Affiliate Strategy (Recognition)

2023-10-11

Contents

- Context – why review now
- Approach – goal and methodology
- Recommendations – need for change
- Findings – what we've learned
- Detailed findings (appendix)

Context – why review now?

- Wikimedia affiliates are a key part of the Wikimedia movement, and affiliates' success is vital to the Wikimedia movement's success

- It is crucial to develop a clear vision regarding the affiliates, making it possible to assess whether the Foundation's investment in, collaboration with, and policy towards affiliates is promoting the right agenda.

- Therefore, the board is developing a strategy in collaboration with the Affiliations Committee (AffCom), the affiliates, and the broader communities. This strategy will help guide the Foundation's work in supporting affiliates for the next few years.

- To ensure continuity and to make the most of institutional memory the elections for AffCom have been delayed until the strategy is complete. The terms of current AffCom members have been prolonged to December 31, 2023. AffCom has continued is regular responsibilities while collaborating on the strategy for affiliate recognition.

Goal of review

Understand how things are working

- Understand how AffCom works

- Understand how AffCom, WMF staff and board liaisons are working together

- Gather views on working with AffCom and WMF from Wikimedia affiliates

- Identify opportunities for change

Methodology of review

Interview AffCom, staff, and affiliates	Review previous analyses

Interview AffCom, staff, and affiliates

- 8 AffCom members and advisors interviewed 1-on-1

- 11 WMF staff interviewed 1-on-1

- 14 EDs interviewed in 5 group sessions

- 65+ community members attended WikiConference India and 9 on-line sessions

- 7 stakeholders interviewed 1-on-1

- 38 responses to 2023 Affiliate Experience Survey (some duplicates)

Review previous analyses

- 2013 Movement Roles Strategy

- 2015 AffCom Resourcing

- 2016 Staff-run AffCom Strategy

- 2016 AffCom Transition Plan

- 2020 AffCom Strategy

- 2023 Movement Partners

Recommendations

- Focus AffCom on recognition by streamlining role
  - AffCom's role has evolved into a very difficult set of tasks, creating a demanding workload for hard-working volunteers
  - Let volunteers do what volunteers to best: exercise judgement
  - Clarify which decisions on recognition, derecognition and conflict rest with AffCom, which are with the CAC, which are with WMF staff, and which with the Board.
- Consider moving some of the admin work from AffCom to staff
  - Give staff the tasks that require quick response and detail
  - Share the work of affiliate support and capacity building
  - Consider structuring affiliate-facing staff to manage relationships, as affiliates now face a confusing array of contacts at WMF
  - Integrate any plan with strategy for WMF and the functions on which it will focus
- Develop a new way to pick members of AffCom
  - Unfreeze process
- Over long term consider transferring powers to Global Council
- Share with staff feedback on other topics raised in review

AffCom's role has evolved into a very difficult set of tasks, which are not well appreciated

- AffCom's role has evolved over time
  - ChapCom originally created when WMF had only 20 employees
  - Evolved from chapters to thematic organizations and user groups
  - Number of affiliates has grown to 177 (74 receive $ from WMF)
  - AffCom often has to play the role of "bad cop" with affiliates: resolving conflicts and (de)recognition issues with legal language
  - Emergence of hubs and partners outside scope confuses role

- AffCom members are volunteers doing a wide range of tasks
  - Much administration, which could be offloaded
  - Hard to focus on core tasks

- AffCom is often a first point of contact for affiliates
  - Recognition, conflicts, derecognition
  - Affiliates may refer to AffCom when not sure of staff contact

- AffCom is poorly understood in the movement
  - Many affiliates have little or no contact at all
  - Little awareness of AffCom's role beyond recognition

What we've learned from AffCom and staff

1. AffCom is a hard-working team

2. AffCom has a complicated set of duties

3. AffCom works in a complicated environment, becoming more complex

4. Role of AffCom has grown over time, yet has become less clear

5. AffCom's role is tough as it is often the "bad cop" saying "no"

6. Election of AffCom members is in question

7. AffCom members tackle a wide variety of tasks

8. Much of work done by AffCom volunteers could be done by staff

9. Staff roles are confused: no single point of contact for each affiliate

10. Board is increasingly involved

11. Some question the proliferation of affiliates … but not all agree

12. These issues are not new … echoes from papers from last 10 years

What we've learned from EDs about working with AffCom and WMF

13. Minimal interaction with AffCom

14. Each works with the WMF in one way or another

15. Many positive comments about working with WMF

16. Sense that quality of collaboration with WMF depends on individuals

17. Desire for both more consultation and streamlining of consultations

18. Desire for more transparency and direct communication, mostly

19. Desire for more training, e.g.: for board members

20. Some confusion about role of hubs

What we've learned from the broad community about working with AffCom

21. Awareness of AffCom focused on recognition – little other contact

22. Confusion about roles and models

23. Questions about accountability – to AffCom or WMF?

24. AffCom could communicate more clearly about its roles

25. AffCom could communicate more clearly about what recognition gives

26. Is AffCom supposed to do bad roles?

27. Desire for for AffCom to provide more support …

28. … especially at the earlier stages

What we've learned from the broad community about working with WMF

29. Appreciation for foundation and many staff

30. Gratitude for grants

31. Frustration with grant application process

32. Sense that grants do not serve emerging communities well

33. Frustration with lack of technical support going back some years

34. Appreciation for consultation with concerns about adding to workload

35. Concerns that WMF is becoming distant from community

What we've learned from the broad community about a vision for the universe of Wikimedia affiliates

36. Mixed views about the number of affiliates

37. Mixed views on why form affiliates

38. Mixed views on how to grow affiliates

39. Threshold for being healthy and ready to fund\

40. Suggestions to have more levels of affiliates

Contents

- Context – why review now

- Approach – goal and methodology

- Recommendations – need for change

- Findings – what we've learned

- Detailed findings (appendix)

What we've learned from AffCom and staff

1. AffCom is a hard-working team

2. AffCom has a complicated set of duties

3. AffCom works in a complicated environment, becoming more complex

4. Role of AffCom has grown over time, yet has become less clear

5. AffCom's role is tough as it is often the "bad cop" saying "no"

6. Election of AffCom members is in question

7. AffCom members tackle a wide variety of tasks

8. Much of work done by AffCom volunteers could be done by staff

9. Staff roles are confused: no single point of contact for each affiliate

10. Board is increasingly involved

11. Some question the proliferation of affiliates … but not all agree

12. These issues are not new … echoes from papers from last 10 years

1) AffCom is a hard-working team

"Feels like a team."

"Give time generously."

"Great group of people."

"What keep AffCom going is good faith."

"Give more time than any other committee."

"Current group is the hardest working group I've worked with."

"More successful than most community organizations with diversity and pulling people from different parts of the movement."

"AffCom seems overworked, and it is trying to do capacity building."

"They are brave volunteers. Their job is to tell people that they are or are not part of the movement. They are peers, often damaging relationships with friends, and accuse of bias."

"Manav and Dumi are great."

2) AffCom has a complicated set of duties

Recognition, derecognition

"Community stamp of approval
on who should be part of the movement."

"People want recognition by becoming an affiliate."

"With over 175 entities some fall out of compliance all
the time. We should have a team that manages it."

"Sometimes if feels like a legal body."

"We need clearer project management
and clearer internal processes."

"Most derecognitions were because people were out of
compliance. In almost every case non-compliance
starts with a conflict, for example over money or who
is in charge."

"AffCom is focused on recognition and conflict
management."

2) AffCom has a complicated set of duties

Conflict resolution

"AffCom is focused on recognition and conflict management."

"Conflict is mostly about mismanagement of funds."

"Where there is a conflict, it always comes down to funding"

"We have to deal with conflicts when they arise –
people use the affiliate to apply for various kinds of grants"

"Half of conflicts come from within organizations: people
complaining about leadership. Biggest issue is how we use
money. We end up with leaders wanting to become
gatekeepers. The other half come from conflicts between
affiliates: stepping on each others' territory."

"AffCom is good a resolving conflicts when there is roughly
even power between informed participants. Problem is when
one party is so angry that they cannot come to mediation."

2) AffCom has a complicated set of duties:

Relationship management

"We are the committee that is closes to affiliates."

Capacity building

"I like nurturing new entities."

"There was an idea to add a third
subcommittee on capacity development."

"We have a 'missing middle' of people building capacity."

"We should be doing capacity building, as nobody else is doing it."

3) AffCom environment increasingly complex

"We have three forms of approved affiliations: chapters, thematic organizations, and user groups. And there is a fourth one, not quite approved, but very present called hubs, which is problematic on many levels, and rather contentious when it comes to funding."

"The potential and impending disaster of hubs needs to be looked at."

"I don't want AffCom to recognize hubs.
It should be done by the global council."

"Regional funding is adding complications."

"It is not defined how we deal with other organizations that collaborate but are not affiliates, e.g.: Goethe Institute."

"We recommend recognizing 'Movement Partners' … doing core work for our movement beyond that of a grantee or affiliate."

"Inconsistency between recognition and funding."

"People are not feeling acknowledged."

4) Role of AffCom has grown over time, yet has become less clear

"In the beginning ChapCom filled a need: WMF only had 20 employees and no attention span for the non-English, non-US parts of the movement. It was created in the Wiki spirit of get a bunch of volunteers to tackle it."

"Original AffCom charter did not have anything about conflict resolution. The latest charter brought that in."

"Conflict resolution went to AffCom because it is closest to affiliates."

"System has a bias to create new entities, so number will continue to grow. People want recognition, funding and tickets to Wikimania"

"Proliferation of affiliates multiples conflicts."

"Lack of guidance from WMF makes the job more difficult."

"We have no charter now. Don't know if MCDC will revise our role."

"What bothers me is that everyone agrees that there is no long a raison d'être, but disbanding the committee would be a public issue."

5) AffCom has a tough role – often "bad cop"

"We are the bad cops.
We don't get a lot of good publicity."

"There is always fallout from managing conflicts."

"Derecognition is a big deal in the movement."

"The work of AffCom is not appreciated in the movement.
Terminations and derecognition are not liked. The language of
resolutions of AffCom are too formal and come across as rude."

"AffCom regularly gets blamed if affiliates are not invited to the
Summit sponsored by WMDE, especially if outsiders are actively
included. It is not clear who decides, or how they decide"

"AffCom should stop doing conflict management.
There should be a peer mediation group to manage it."

6) Election of AffCom members is in question

"Delay in elections was not well received."

"The way AffCom gets its members … comes down to a popularity contest. It does not work terribly well when you need skill sets. In future it would be great if we could try out a hybrid … like the board."

"I would love to figure out a way to bring into AffCom younger and more diverse volunteers, perhaps from newer, smaller affiliates. Elections tend to deliver the same folks who have been around for a while."

7) AffCom members tackle a variety of tasks

"Not what I expected when I joined."

"I want to be able to work within my timeframe.
I am still a volunteer."

"This is too much like a business environment.
Am I still a volunteer or am I working for someone?"

"Long meetings. Sometimes discussions are rambling."

"It is theoretically 3 hours a month. Actually, it's 8-10 hours."

"The work is very intense. It has been hard to work with Asana."

"Sometimes I feel that our role is just working."

"I did not have any experience about this kind of committee work
before. I have been trying to understand how it functions."

"I needed a full year to get into AffCom thinking mode."

"We don't all understand the legal language."

"Everything is in legal language."

"Sometimes staff feel like the boss."

8) Much of the work of AffCom could be done by staff – *AffCom member views*

"More of the recognition work could be handled by staff."

"In many ways the most efficient way to do the work would be to get WMF to do it. AffCom came into reality because WMF lacked resources. However, WMF has a history of trying to do something, then getting ripped apart by the community, and not all the community … just a couple of voices"

"Affiliation should be done by professionals. I'm not sure whether AffCom should be volunteer. For both affiliation and conflict, it might be better to have a professional team."

"Staff should review the by-laws first.
We should only focus on what's missing."

8) Much of the work of AffCom could be done by staff – *staff views*

"What AffCom does could be done by a staff person."

"AffCom is good at offering community perspective. Its review of bylaws has seen challenges. This should be an expert matter."

"Volunteers should handle what volunteers are good at – judgement – but right now they deal with a lot of detail and conflict resolution."

"Affiliates expect to have a personal relationship with WMF, not compliance. We have not been able to create personal relationships as there are too many of them."

"If AffCom should not do capacity building, who to refer to?"

"80% of complaints are about response time."

"To the extent that we need community oversight it could be done at a higher level."

9) Staff roles are confused – *AffCom views*

"I've never seen a JD."

"There is no list of staff."

"Reporting structure needs to be clearer."

"Always unsure where the boundaries are."

"I would like there to be clearer boundaries."

"I hate Asana. I don't think anyone likes Asana."

"We need clear project management: not a tool, a person."

"It's nobody's job in the foundation or AffCom to fix governance issues in affiliates, e.g.: when there is an election"

"We assume that a lot of things are happening behind our backs."

9) Staff roles are confused – *staff views*

"There is no WMF strategy for affiliates."

"Biggest challenge is that support is very scattered."

"No centralized relationship management – one off contacts."

"Affiliates tend to centralize their communication with WMF
through their favorite contact, often the grant officer."

"No unified understanding of what affiliates are for, even in teams
facing affiliates. It's even worse with tech teams that have no idea
what affiliates do, nor do they appreciate their contributions."

"Resentment against the WMF is mostly from people
that don't get attention or resources that they want."

"I don't think that we have a shared approach to
how we work with affiliates."

"WMF should have a team of affiliate liaisons –
primary points of contact."

10) Board is increasingly involved

"The board is increasingly involved. Increasing involvement is a real concern: where does the board stop doing board stuff and start meddling in operations? But I don't want the pendulum to swing the other way and for the board to show no interest. If the board is not involved, we cannot get traction for anything."

"Historically AffCom had the power. I'm not sure now if they have the authority. AffCom communicated a decision and then we were asked to change both the communication and the decision."

"Challenging if trustees interacting with junior members of staff."

"Sometimes the presence of the board liaison is to help up. Some of my colleagues feel like it is a bit like having the teacher on your shoulder."

"More like overseers."

11) Some question the proliferation of affiliates

"The process has a bias to create."

"We need to end up with fewer affiliates.
At this rate we will be going to to 250 by 2025."

"I would like to see the number of affiliates decline."

"It's alarming that we have ten applications from Nigeria."

"Doubling the number of affiliates would not make sense."

"The more affiliates we create, the more conflicts we have."

"The affiliation model is getting out of control. We are seeing
Balkanization. People try to set up affiliates to get access to
resources which they do not want to share with established
affiliates. We need to close the faucet of applications."

"I would be happy for the number of affiliates to stay the same."

"We do need an overall strategy to say that the reason we are
supporting affiliates is because we want them to do make
contributions like increase content on English Wikipedia on Africa."

"We are sending funding to regions that are not ready to receive.
Regional funding is not working. It is not delivering results."

But not everyone agrees

"The number of affiliates will increase."

"I would like to see more user groups."

"Affiliates can be as numerous as the stars!"

"We should get as many affiliates as we can
to get to the 2030 strategy."

"I would say that we need more.
We could have 250 chapters and 500 user groups."

12) None of this is new

Many previous analyses …

- 2013 Movement Roles Strategy
- 2015 AffCom Resourcing
- 2016 Staff-run AffCom Strategy
- 2016 AffCom Transition Plan
- 2020 AffCom Strategy
- 2023 Movement Partners

… expressing a broad range of views

"Immediately increase staff support."

"Moratorium on approval of new chapters and thematic organizations."

"… adjusting the committee's charter from an advisory committee of the Board to a fully staff-run committee of experts."

"AffCom should be disbanded. There is no longer a need."

What we've learned from EDs about working with AffCom and WMF

13. Minimal interaction with AffCom

14. Each works with the WMF in one way or another

15. Many positive comments about working with WMF

16. Sense that quality of collaboration with WMF depends on individuals

17. Desire for both more consultation and streamlining of consultations

18. Desire for more transparency and direct communication, mostly

19. Desire for more training, e.g.: for board members

20. Some confusion about role of hubs

13) EDs have minimal interaction with AffCom

"No contact."

"Once a year for the annual report"

"Not familiar with AffCom until recently."

"No direct interaction with AffCom in 11 years of experience,
except possibly filling out a survey."

14) Each ED works with the WMF

"Interact with almost all departments
within the Wikimedia Foundation."

"Work directly with the foundation."

"Regular contact with the grant officer."

"Main contact is for grant related matters."

"Frequent contact with Trust & Safety team."

"Collaborate with the advancement and grants
teamsat the Foundation to secure funding."

"Collaborations, joint initiatives, sharing of practices,
seeking support and advice, and troubleshooting."

"Collaborate with the WMF on thematic areas."

"Direct contact with various people at the foundation."

"Participate in webinars and meetings related to important
movement discussions, such as strategy and annual plans."

"Work closely with the software development team at the Foundation,
focusing on product development and knowledge exchange."

15) EDs had many positive comments about working with WMF

"Generally positive interactions."

"Feels aligned in values and mission."

"The foundation effectively supports diversity, modern approaches, and global openness."

"The Foundation is great at fundraising and consistently supportsthe movement with funding."

"The foundation proactively offers support during critical situations, such as communication crises."

"The foundation's global staff helps navigate cultural differences and ensures effective communication."

"The foundation's assistance with legal matters provides affiliates with a sense of security and backup."

"Value the strong connection and shared vision with foundation staff."

"The grant officer plays a crucial role in supporting affiliates, providing knowledge, and assisting in program evaluation and improvement."

"Communication with the foundation is honest, respectful, and has integrity."

"Appreciate the approachability and partnership demonstrated by Maryana."

16) Sense that quality of interaction with WMF depends on individuals

"Sometimes feel disconnected."

"Challenge of finding the right contacts
and support within the Foundation."

"Changes in personnel can significantly impact
the nature of relationships and collaborations."

"Need for better understanding of affiliate's operations."

"It would be helpful if points of contact at the Foundation
weren't as variable and changing over time, with more
stability and upward trajectory in building relationships."

"Quality of collaboration heavily depends on the individuals involved
and their understanding of the community and affiliates' work."

17) Desire for both more consultation and streamlining of consultations

"The foundation should focus on addressing systemic difficulties and be more responsive to individual needs."

"Desire equal partnership with the Foundation and want
to be actively involved in decisions from the beginning."

" Engage more with chapters and affiliates to tap into their innovative ideas and provide a platform for their voices to be heard."

"The foundation should avoid running multiple consultation processes simultaneously, as it can create coordination challenges and require extensive effort from smaller affiliates."

"The foundation's current approach of reaching out with questions, surveys, and requests for calls is positive for relationship-building but suggests that the coordination of these interactions could be improved, especially for smaller affiliate teams.

18) Desire for more transparency and direct communication, mostly

"Need for a direct communication channel between the foundation and the ED of the chapter."

"Would like more proactive communication."

"Lack of communication between the Wikimedia Foundation and local affiliates is an issue, particularly when the foundation engages in partnerships or events without informing the affiliates."

"Reduce the direct flow of information from the Wikimedia Foundation to community channels like the Village Pump, as it can overwhelm users and create confusion. Exploring alternative channels for information dissemination might be more effective."

19) Desire for more training and tools

"Provide training and experiences for affiliates, such as
international classes for board members, to improve governance
and harmonization within the movement."

"Offer training and support for board members to enhance
their understanding of the Wikimedia Foundation
and their roles within the movement."

"Offer resources and support to understand existing
practices in other affiliates, like rotating EDs,
and facilitate the exchange of information."

"Provide tools, expertise, and metrics to measure
the implementation of the global strategy,
enabling affiliates to assess their progress effectively."

"Establish an anti-burnout system and provide
support to executive directors and leaders
to prevent frustration and promote well-being."

20) Some confusion about the role of hubs

"Concern about the lack of formally recognized hubs and the absence of a clear plan for transitioning power to the regional level."

"Foundation needs to communicate its intentions regarding the transition of power and resources to regional hubs to avoid creating dual layers of structures and power dynamics."

What we've learned from the broad community about working with AffCom

21. Awareness of AffCom focused on recognition – little other contact

22. Confusion about roles and models

23. Questions about accountability – to AffCom or WMF?

24. AffCom could communicate more clearly about its roles

25. AffCom could communicate more clearly about what recognition gives

26. Is AffCom supposed to do bad roles?

27. Desire for for AffCom to provide more support …

28. … especially at the earlier stages

21) Awareness of AffCom focused on recognition

"Very little interaction with AffCom."

"AffCom should communicate more."

"If AffCom does anything other than recognitions,
its work is invisible right now."

"AffCom has been a sustainable organization for many years
now, and I think it has been able to keep functioning
despite many internal and external issues it has faced."

"We have not had a lot of interaction with Affcom. Affcom should
be clear on what value Affcom brings to experienced affiliates."

"As far as I know there is hardly any interaction with any affiliate by
AffCom after recognition. I am still undecided whether AffCom is a
trolling committee or a committee of trolls."

"I suggest being more friendly and compassionate with volunteers,
since in our previous experience of being declined for recognition,
we were only asked to review its meta page since our understanding
may be lacking. Some questions were also left unanswered, and we
are in confusion as to where exactly we went wrong in some areas.
But, positively speaking, when I've approached them and asked for
their guidance through a call, they've willingly extended their help."

22) Confusion about roles and models

"Communities are already confused with how the Affiliate model works, since the move from chapter-centered model. Complicated to distinguish the UG from a Chapter, for example."

"Often people don't have clear the difference between different affiliation models (or don't believe those distinctions are meaningful). This is sometimes visible because they say it, but more often because they get confused when talking about it."

"Even though people don't know about AffCom conflict resolution role, or are not confident in their ability to do it, seem to want a way to escalate conflicts."

"One big issue is probably also the lack of progress - you stay a "user group" until almost the final form of the organization. There are no steps in between that would ndicate any kind of progress the same way the WikiProject Med pushed so hard for a title of "thematic organisation" that is in itself meaningless.

"There is a critical mass that is needed, as well as a progression. Even some of the basic steps are unknown for some affiliates."

23) Questions about accountability – to AffCom or WMF?

"What is it that the Foundation wants from affiliates?"

"Who is responsible for holding affiliates accountable? Is it WMF or Affcom?"

"Foundation should start asking affiliates to have more accountability, about their activities."

"How to grow sense of [affiliates] belonging toward their community?"

"Is anyone reading the reports, where do they go?"

"The report page helps to save our time to make sure that we can confirm an affiliate is legitimately recognized. "

"It does seem like there is alot of upward information transfer, and there does not seem to be much feedback or even collaboration on the opportunities and challenges that are identified in the report."

24) AffCom could communicate more clearly about its roles

"Communication with AffCom should be clearer (timeline, with the clear understanding of the steps/time)."

"Affcom could start doing regular information sessions with affiliates"

"A huge gap about what AffCom is doing, and why the decisions are made in that way. More transparency."

"Seems that decisions of AffCom are fragmented, that people do not understand that there is a logic behind it."

"We need more opportunities to interact and connect with AffCom and other affiliates through AffCom."

"The second, there was an application for a regional user group, we said it is up toAaffcom and foundation on this issue. We did not get any answer from WMF or Affcom, then a few months later, the application was refused and caused animosity in the community due to the lack of response and transparency. It was difficult to explain what happened and why it happened."

"Affcom should be clear on what value affcom brings to experienced affiliates. Should affcom play more prominent role? Should Affcom be an intermediary between Affiliates and the foundation ? e.g.: during board elections."

25) AffCom could communicate more clearly about what recognition gives

"Making understood to the community the benefits of being a recognized affiliate, as it is taken for granted that all Wikimedians know that."

"AffCom should be clear on what value AffCom brings to experienced affiliates. Should AffCom play more prominent role? Should AffCom be an intermediary between Affiliates and the foundation, e.g.: during board elections."

"The status should not mean that you are entitled to get grants. A lot of people are trying to form an affiliate to receive funds."

26) Is AffCom supposed to do "bad roles"?

"There could be more attention paid to conflict resolution, as sometimes handling things just by calls or emails, however without having an immersion in the community, there is context lost. If there could be some regional ambassadors that could come from the community, they could help to look for important statements or points that are more context-based."

"Even though people don't know about AffCom conflict resolution role, or are not confident in their ability to do it, seem to want a way to escalate conflicts."

"Unnecessary for AffCom to do. There is T&S to de-escalate conflicts. It is unclear how a volunteer body can have enough skills to do it. The same with recognition or checking if an affiliate is in good standing (financial reporting etc)."

"There is basically no transparency of activities specially by smaller UGs beside annual reports that can hide internal conflicts. No whistleblower mechanism to prevent cases of Wikimedia X. (...) It needs more contacting staff, active members who are not in leadership in a confidential manner."

"There has been many many conflicts and there is no mechanism to do conflict resolution."

"Policy changes are needed to not put a volunteering body to make decisions of derecognising, to not have someone [like volunteers] to play bad guys (like T&S banning people)"

27) Desire for AffCom to provide more support

"Some kind of training to the Board members of the affiliates - this could help to skill up the affiliates. And it would help us to achieve more success that way."

"Help / training / discussions with good governance."

"would like to see that AffCom is more involved in trainings"

"Looking at a lot of affiliates and their contacts that are registered. However, unsure how regularly the affiliate contact page is being kept up-to-date. So coming up with an advisory, and toolkit, [about how/need to stay active?]."

"The Foundation/AffCom could be more supportive in getting affiliates or prospective affiliates to a level where they can better self-organize."

"Division and low community health is the leading cause of affiliate decline in our observations."

"It would be great if AffCom did something like a Let's Conect for affiliates."

28) Desire for AffCom to provide more support … especially at the earlier stages

"If there is a workflow to join (like WLM), it is easier, but more difficult if to start from the zero."

"Thinking about rescuing or helping build the informal groups that have not been recognized. Perhaps affcom could communicate with them again to assess their position, or help to work towards their objectives, perhaps to eventually recognizing them in fact, to help impact that community that would have been served."

"Affcom should have dedicated people who can direct newly formed groups for the first few months, like a mentorship program. When we got recognised, this was the last point of connection with Affcom, until the regional meeting""

"Some support for affiliates is needed before they fail, e.g.: when they are behind in reporting or declining in activity, membership or other issues. There should be support provided before it's beyond repair."

What we've learned from the broad community about working with WMF

29. Appreciation for foundation and many staff

30. Gratitude for grants

31. Frustration with grant application process

32. Sense that grants do not serve emerging communities well

33. Frustration with lack of technical support going back some years

34. Appreciation for consultation with concerns about adding to workload

35. Concerns that WMF is becoming distant from community

29) Appreciation for many WMF staff

"Feel supported by Xeno and legal."

"Everyone has been quite helpful and expedient."

"The Foundation always helps when I ask for something."

"WMF's Trust & Safety team does really important work."

"Better supported by the Foundation than when I started."

"WMF has supported us with financial and human resources."

"We feel our relationship with the Wikimedia Foundation improved
significantly when Maryana took over the role of the CEO."

"I feel supported by certain individuals and sections in the foundation."

"Feeling very well supported at the regional level – J has been amazing!"

"Foundation has a positive attitude! They listen and spend time to hear us."

"I am lucky to have many relationships with individual WMF staff members,
and I've felt incredibly supported by the people. Individually, those who work
for WMF, I believe, genuinely share our vision, and do their best to support
affiliates and individual contributors in the movement."

30) Gratitude for grants

"It has been fantastic to get three-year funding
and to be able to employ staff."

"WMF foundation supports with money, but not otherwise.
More money would help."

31) Frustration with grants application process

"Application not approved."

"We are not supported by the Foundation,
and mostly we don't know where to go."

"The foundation in only interested in the new
– no interest in maintaining current."

"There has been trouble applying for grants
even for smaller rapid grants."

"Grants process is problematic – too many changes."

"WMF gave us a platform to report, but it is not easy to reach or use."

"Applications take time - Rapid funds are not rapid anymore."

"Grant officer is only one person, so the communication is slow."

"Too many changes in Grants teams, cannot forge connections."

"The grants process is quite problematic. On several occasions we have been
turned down for grants by a committee that is unfamiliar with the Wikimedia
movement and instead recommends risky projects."

32) Sense that grants do not serve emerging communities well

"The Rapid Funds aren't 'rapid' anymore - they're taking sometimes two months to process."

"If there are ways to reduce bureaucracy in certain cases, that would help support countries with different demands and challenges."

"Smaller affiliates would not know (especially if they do not receive grants) how to contact the Foundation, and whom to ask."

"Maybe there needs to be a way to have even smaller grants (microgrants) because we really only want to start small, and in fact it has proved harder to get smaller grants than larger ones. Some of our contributors are students so even just to get a grant proposal for affiliate accounts there has been trouble getting approved."

33) Frustration with lack of technical support going back some years

"Not supported by product & tech."

"Years of ignored technical concerns."

"Many tools that were hard-built by volunteers
could be supported by the Foundation."

"The Foundation should look to tech things, such as tools that are
needed, some kind of expensive, difficult to build tool - that
demands a higher structure that only the biggest chapters or the
Foundation has the structure to tackle."

34) Appreciation for extensive consultation with concerns about adding to workload

"Asking too many surveys (with similar questions) again & again without any real action to change."

"I cannot help but think that sometimes the Foundation is making it more difficult for itself than it needs to."

"The downside of the extensive consultation is how is slows down delivery and execution. The WMF could overcome this by knowing when to continue with consultations and when to simply put things to a vote. For example; for the 2030 strategy I would have said we have X many years (perhaps 2) to draft a plan after which it would be put to a vote by the community. If it does not pass, then start work on a 2035 strategy and tell everyone this is the process and stick to it."

35) Concerns that WMF is becoming distant from community

"Foundation should be less opaque
and more accountable to the Wikimedia constituents."

"Foundation is acting more and more like a big company;
it should get closer to the communities."

"What they can possibly start with is having an ambassador for each
region, or if possible, for each country that has an existing affiliate."

What we've learned from the broad community about a vision for the universe of Wikimedia affiliates

36. Mixed views about the number of affiliates

37. Mixed views on why form affiliates

38. Mixed views on how to grow affiliates

39. Threshold for being healthy and ready to fund\

40. Suggestions to have more levels of affiliates

36) Mixed views about the number of affiliates

"The Foundation is in an impossible position where they would need to figure out how to divide resources, which are going to be limited, but the growth [of number of affiliates] is inevitable."

"Number of affiliates and overlaps. A common answer to the question of whether we have too many or too few affiliates seems to be that it's not about the number; we'd like to have more affiliates, but with less overlaps (and, as one person put it, with a clearer purpose."

""There are both too many and too few affiliates. Too few: we should be having an affiliate for each mature linguistic projects, country and thematic. Too many: there should not be more than one affiliate working on the same thing in the same area."

"In the next 5 - 10 years, the affiliate count should go down. An affiliate should become an organization of its own and should not be entirely be dependent on Wikimedia Foundation."

" On the number of affiliates, we do see too many affiliate, but we need to see more. We need a process for affcom to check affiliate activity and renew or revoke affiliate status based on this."

"The problem with affiliates is not so much about the number (after all, how many is too many?). It's more about the purpose and overlapping functions that certain groups might have with each other and with teams at the WMF."

37) Mixed views on why form new affiliates

"We formed an affiliate in order to "be heard" at some of the venues where affiliates are present. Meanwhile the work is technically done with the functionary hat (...) the need to create groups to get support is perhaps not the best option."

"A way to get support without having to make an affiliate is needed and will prevent the over-proliferation of affiliates."

"Too many affiliates. duplications, no clear understanding why they are created, and maybe there should be a reach out to them, to check if they are struggling."

"The status [as an affiliate] should not mean that you are entitled to get grants. A lot of people are trying to form an affiliate to receive funds."

"Does becoming an affiliate or a user group automatically makes you elegible for funding? The mere fact that you exist means that you have to receive money? To me, these questions have an obvious answer: no."

"I'm concerned about the ongoing trend to create new user groups that overlap with others or that seemingly fulfill the sole purpose of traveling to Berlin or Wikimania."

38) Mixed views on how to grow affiliates

"There should be experienced groups that could work with emerging groups to share with them trainings and best practices, to help with campaigns and community organizing."

"At this point we do wonder where our affiliate should go - e.g.: try to become large like WM De, and of course, there is an issue of what the funding looks like for us, and what capacities we might have."

"The most important thing is having principles on how to work: transparency, accountability, … what do you stand by for. In terms of conditions, having a strategy, or a plan for what you want to achieve. We are forming a user group because of A, B, C… We are creating all these institutional structures without knowing what audiencies they are serving, what they want to change…"

"Community leaders have more accountability, but affiliate leadership – do not. There is no room for others, so people just want to create new groups."

"Community health of affiliates is really affected by how a new affiliate starts off with their financial systems. Money can be extremely toxic when affiliates start in a community, and by helping to set up the systems early on, the transparency, financial control. Supporting community health of affiliates [is important], as you cannot work with them, if they are in a toxic environment."

39) Threshold for an affiliate being healthy and ready to fund

"These are two different questions (being healthy and ready to fund). It's not about a checklist. Wikimedia X had a board and a legal structure; was it working? No!"

"A more transparent leadership selection mechanism, a mechanism to make sure leadership rotate from time to time to people with different opinions. Conflict resolution mechanism (...) Intervene much earlier, before it causes explosions. Force affiliates to have a more robust and healthier decision making and governance through policies such as mandatory limit on leadership position tenure."

"Having tiers (levels) of user groups – more developed, less developed (by [number of] members, to [be able to] receive funding; more responsibilities)."

"In the future, I want to see a universe where each affiliate works closely with each other. I think we will also need to have more knowledge-sharing sessions between affiliates. I want to see a universe where affiliates are not afraid to share their failure story."

"We need a scale of affiliates effectivity - who is doing what, table format, what works - copyright, laws, education."

40) Suggestion to have more levels of affiliates

"[We need to have] tiers (levels) of user groups – more developed, less developed ([maybe] by members, to [check if eligible to] receive funding; more responsibilities)."

"The problem with affiliates is not so much about the number (after all, how many is too many?). It's more about the purpose and overlapping functions that certain groups might have with each other and with teams at the Foundation. Examples of this include the Education UG and the Education team at the Foundation, the gender gap groups that overlap with the work of affiliates with a gender perspective, or several affiliates existing on a same geographical area and/or country."

"Look at the creation of WM EUrope and CEE hub. Both started because we felt it was useful. (...) At some point both were told by the foundation to pause because it wasn't clear yet what a hub would have been."