

The future of Wikidata Events

Research Report

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1 Executive Summary

Understanding and addressing diverse community needs.

This research effort, conducted from March to August 2024, was carried out by Léa Lacroix - Community Engagement & Events Consultant Contractor for Wikimedia Deutschland- and Mattia Capozzi Sorrentino - who formerly worked with Wikimedia Deutschland as UX Researcher for Wikidata and Wikibase.



The motivation behind this project was the necessity to develop new formats for Wikidata events. This need emerged from the limitations observed in the previous WikidataCon format, particularly in light of the community's significant growth in the past years.

Acknowledging the diverse needs and global reach of the Wikidata community, this project aimed to identify new formats for events that could effectively serve a broader audience.

Our objective was to investigate the range of possibilities and alternatives to the current formats, with a particular emphasis on inclusivity, environmental sustainability, accessibility, and accommodating the varied requirements of different communities worldwide.

Over the course of approximately three weeks, from mid-April to early May, we engaged with a diverse range of participants, focusing on community event organizers. This group varied in age, gender, geographical location, and experience levels within the Wikimedia movement.

In preparing this report, we made a conscious effort to respect and reflect the varied opinions of all participants: we highlight the differences in perspectives and what each participant group contributed to the research. This approach ensures that the

report provides a balanced and comprehensive overview of the community's current state, acknowledging the distinct needs and preferences that exist within it.

By understanding and addressing these diverse needs, we aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the Wikidata community, aligned with [Wikimedia Deutschland's Strategic Direction](#).

This report serves as a roadmap for future initiatives, ensuring that we can continue to evolve in a way that benefits everyone involved.

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2 Background

Context and evolution of WikidataCon

When WikidataCon was first conceived in 2016, based on community requests, and first implemented in 2017, the context within the Wikimedia movement was quite different from what it is today: at that time, Wikidata was only four years old and still considered the newest Wikimedia project. For many Wikimedians, it was a peculiar new initiative perceived as highly technical and a potential disruption to their established practices.

The core community of Wikidata was relatively small and predominantly based in the Global North: an event accommodating 150 people in Berlin could include most of the core contributors. Movement conferences, such as Wikimania, provided limited space for detailed discussions on Wikidata, while local European conferences, like German WikiCon, featured only basic presentations that were often met with negative reactions.



Picture of community members from the WikidataCon of 2017. Rama, CC-BY SA. [on Wikimedia Commons.](#)

Discussions about the risks and utility of Wikidata were common both online and at in-person events. Despite this, Wikidata meetups at Wikimania were extremely popular, often exceeding the capacity of the allocated rooms.

The growing Wikidata community needed a dedicated space to express their enthusiasm, share knowledge, and discuss specific topics that did not find a place in global events. Although discussions about the sustainability of international events were starting to emerge, onsite events were still the norm, and flying a large group to Berlin was generally accepted.

At that time, Wikidata was not yet well-known in the [Linked Open Data \(LOD\)](#) world and was frequently compared to [Freebase](#) or [DBpedia](#). Wikimedia Deutschland needed to establish its role in the Wikimedia Movement as the steward of Wikidata as a product and as a supporting role for its community.

Seven years later, the context has evolved considerably: Wikidata is now almost 12 years old and it is well integrated into events such as Wikimania. Meanwhile, the community has grown rapidly and become more diverse: for instance, the online WikidataCon in 2021 saw participation from 700 people.

Additionally, local communities in countries like Brazil and Taiwan have become highly active, organizing their own Wikidata-specific events. Alongside, emerging communities, particularly in African countries, have embedded Wikidata as a core part of their editing and outreach activities.

Organizing a large onsite event like the WikidataCon raises issues related to gathering hundreds of people from all around the world. Problems of resources, environmental impact and unfair selection based on who needs and can get a visa to travel to the conference place arise, and alternative models must be explored.

Every year, at the occasion of the [Wikidata birthday](#) in October, dozens of local communities, Wikimedia affiliates and individuals organize local events to celebrate the accomplishments of the community and inform their local network and institutions about Wikidata. In some particularly active communities, these events constitute small “WikidataCon” conferences on their own, and people develop an intense creativity to imagine events that will engage the local audience.



Wikidata Awareness Walk in Tamale, Ghana, celebrating Wikidata's 10th birthday. Alhassan Mohammed Awal [on Wikimedia Commons](#).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online conferences proved to be highly accessible and inclusive, enabling participation from those who typically could not attend onsite events, and there has also been a growing awareness of the environmental impact of large, in-person conferences.

Since 2021, Wikimedia Deutschland has been organizing 3-4 online events per year, creating and iterating on the [“XXX Days” format](#). These events usually focus on a specific topic that is important to the Wikidata community, to discuss, address challenges and move forward on specific areas of the project, for example, the [Data Quality Days](#) or the [Lexicodays](#).



Occasionally, these events also target a broader audience, such as the [Data Reuse Days](#) (data reusers and institutions) or the [Leveling Up Days](#) (newcomers).

This format of events brought some actionable input to the development team and supported connection and conviviality among community members - however, in most cases, the participation from the Global South was relatively low and a small group of people formed the recurring, engaged participants of most events.

However, hybrid formats have presented organizational challenges and received mixed feedback, and fatigue from virtual events has set in after three years.

The decentralized Wikidata birthday events, autonomously organized by community members over the years, have been a great instrument for community engagement, both before and during the pandemic. Partnering with emerging communities to lead WikidataCon, such as [Brazil in 2021](#) and [Taiwan in 2023](#), brought diversity and different approaches to the conference but have been [quite complex to organize](#). The 2023 edition [faced various organizational issues](#), and highlighted the varying needs of different communities.

With a growing and diverse community, multiple and conflicting needs to be met, and a particular attention to resources and environmental impact, what forms of community engagement can we develop in the future? Through discussions with active Wikidata organizers, we explored various ideas and proposals.

3 Methodology

Capturing community insights through a mixed-methodology approach.

The entire research project was carried out from mid-March until August 2024: the interviews were conducted over approximately three weeks, from mid-April to early May, and it included a diverse range of participants.

To comprehensively capture the community's viewpoints, we went for a mixed-methods approach:

- **One-on-One Interviews:** we conducted five individual interviews to gather in-depth insights.
- **Asynchronous Feedback:** we collected feedback from twelve participants using a Google Doc.

| Phase | Activity | Duration |
|-----------------------|--|----------------|
| Planning | Define objectives Recruit participants Design the interview brief and form | March to April |
| Collecting the data | Conduct 1:1 interviews Collect feedback from the form | April to May |
| Analysis and feedback | Compile and analyze the data Draft the Research Report Collect feedback from stakeholder | June to July |
| Define and present | Iterate on the Research Report Present it to the community Present it to WMDE's Stakeholders | July to August |

The **17 participants** represented a wide range of demographics, including age, gender, geographical location, and experience levels within the Wikimedia Movement: specifically, we engaged with individuals from Ghana (2), Nigeria (1), Brazil (2), India (4), the USA (1), New Zealand (1), Indonesia (1), Taiwan (1), Turkey (1), the United Arab Emirates (1), France (1), and Benin (1).

Our primary recruitment criteria included active involvement in the Wikidata community, regular organization of local events and projects, and quite a solid understanding of the Wikimedia movement.

We also engaged seasoned community organizers from the global Wikidata community to discuss logistical aspects, such as grant applications and funding, leveraging their extensive experience.

We decided to carefully frame the questions to avoid implying promises from Wikimedia Deutschland, rather focusing on what the movement at large can do to support the community and their needs.

Key topics for our questions included:

Community Needs and Desires:

- First and foremost, we wanted to understand what the community members need and desire from future events and explore the types of events and formats that would best serve the community.

Alternative Event Formats:

- We wanted to investigate possible alternative formats for future events, considering different models and understanding how each of them addresses diverse preferences.

You can access the interview brief with all the questions in the [Appendix A](#) at the end of this document.

4 Key Findings

Core insights from the research we have conducted.

The research uncovered several key findings regarding the organization and impact of events. These findings highlight critical areas for consideration: in the following section, we will delve into each of these themes, providing a comprehensive analysis of each one of them, with examples of opportunities and challenges.



The research revealed several important aspects, mainly related to the format of events, participant engagement and retention, and support for event organizers, with a particular emphasis on the critical role of funding and accessibility.

Firstly, there was no unanimous consensus on the **best format for events**. Both in-person and online or hybrid events come with their own sets of opportunities and challenges. A **decentralized approach** to organizing events was frequently discussed, alongside the benefits of forming partnerships with local institutions.

Regarding participant engagement and retention, the research highlighted the significance of **motivation** and incentives, as well as the crucial role of **training** and mentorship programs.

Finally, supporting event organizers emerged as a key theme. **Securing and accessing funding** was identified as a vital component, necessary to ensure accessibility to the Wikidata, to training resources, and to promotional items like swag.

Theme: **Events Format**

The first main theme identified in our findings is the lack of consensus on whether in-person or online events are superior: most participants have experience in both organizing and attending both types of events and have provided valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of each format. Despite the recognition of the distinct advantages of in-person events, the numerical and anecdotal data do not decisively favor one format over the other.

Subtheme: **In-person events**

In-person events offer significant benefits in terms of engagement, networking, and community building, but they often face challenges related to logistics, accessibility, and language barriers. Let's look at the opportunities:

Enhanced engagement

In-person events generally foster higher levels of engagement and interaction, leading to more effective and productive outcomes.

Collaborative atmosphere and memorable interactions

Direct face-to-face interactions allow participants to gain deeper insights and create memorable experiences.

Networking opportunities

In-person events provide valuable opportunities for networking, enabling participants to connect with peers, share knowledge, and build professional relationships.



What participants said about the opportunities of in-person events

The Wikidata Day in NYC really helped keep the engagement (...) in general, these events really help with networking. - Richard Knipel

My takeaway is that in-person Wikidata events have more engagement and results than hybrid or purely online. - Eder Porto

Let's take a look at the challenges of in-person events, instead:

Location Limitations

Organizing events in specific locations may limit participation due to travel and visa constraints and associated costs.

Logistics

Setting up the necessary infrastructure and logistics for large in-person gatherings can be complex and resource-intensive.



Some mentioned challenges of in-person events

There are language barriers challenges (for example, in the past, several French-speaking contributors didn't attend events because their language was not provided). - Saliousoft

Subtheme: **Online and hybrid events**

On the other hand, online and hybrid events provide global accessibility and cost-effectiveness but struggle with technical issues and often result in lower engagement and interaction. The decision between in-person and online events should consider these opportunities and challenges to best meet the needs of the participants and the goals of the event.

Here below the opportunities:

Global Accessibility

Online events can be attended by participants from all over the world, removing most geographical, financial and administrative barriers. While traveling to an onsite event can be expensive and require a visa to enter the country, leading to an unfair selection of who can attend and who cannot, online events provide the possibility for most people to attend an event.

Content Accessibility

A positive aspect of native online events is that recording sessions and materials is easier to do than during onsite events, as it doesn't require expensive equipment or recording setup in physical rooms. Providing multilingual content is also easier online (with pre-recorded videos including captions, virtual rooms for interpreters, etc.)

What participants said about the opportunities for online and hybrid events

Considering the global nature of the Wikimedia movement, more online and hybrid events should be encouraged and held. - John Samuel

Most of the organized events are online, simply because of the diversity of the members. Often people are distributed everywhere and we want to maintain this diversity: having just one section of people coming from the same background or that live in the same place is not easy and we might not want that. - Benedict Udeh

Technical Challenges

Remote events are often plagued by network issues, which can disrupt participation and engagement.

Lower Engagement

Online events typically see lower levels of engagement compared to in-person events, affecting overall effectiveness. Social interactions, especially, are limited during online events, and despite the possibilities to recreate interaction (social time, games, using platforms with a gaming component), it doesn't feel exactly the same as meeting people in person.

Some mentioned challenges of online and hybrid events

Another challenge was that we could not attend some of the events effectively. For Leveling Up Days of 2024, we faced the difficulty of joining platforms (Jitsi) and different time zones. And most of the time announcements were limited. - Akbarali

The experimentation with WikidataCon in the last couple of years organized in a distributed manner could not engage Wikidata enthusiasts from all over the world and decreased the quality of the event. - Bodhisattwa

I have a gut feeling that people are missing the in-person events. For the long term engagement this is very important. Remote events do not have the same effect, overall, as I feel like people do not end up being particularly engaged. - Érica Azzellini

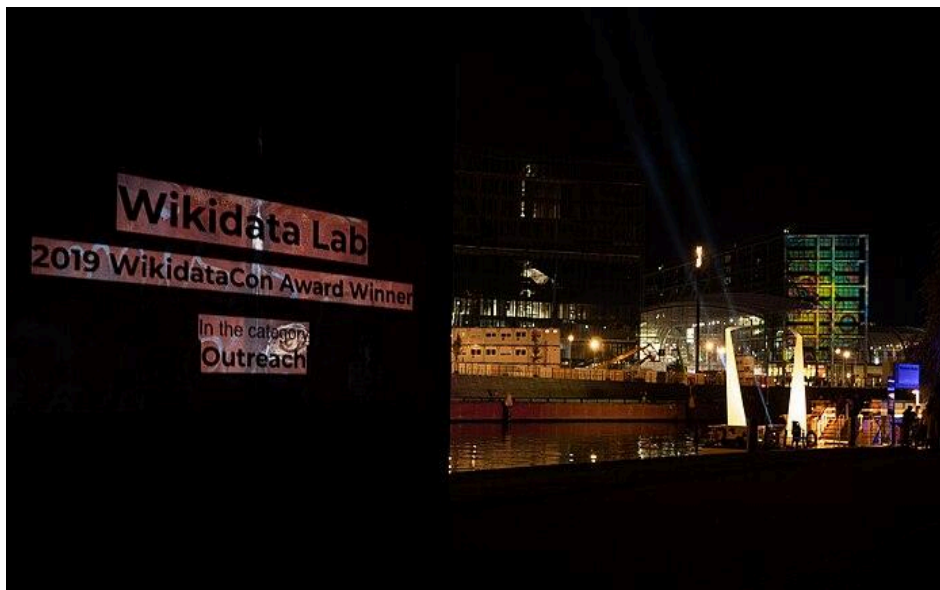
In general, live streaming is also not very engaging and exciting rather than being in-person. - Richard Knipel

Subtheme: **Decentralized approach**

We will now present a case study that offers valuable insights into the topic of decentralization: [Wikidata Labs](#). A series of training programs taking place since October 2017 and organized by the [Wiki Movimento User Group](#). The format is based on a thematic presentation with discussion followed by a hands-on activity. The aim is to provide training on specific Wikidata tools/projects, strengthen the lusophone community around Wikidata related themes, gather Wikimedians, scholars and GLAM professionals around Wikidata resources. Most Wikidata Labs are in Portuguese, but some editions are held in English.

We will talk about this format from two perspectives: Wiki Movimento Brazil and the Portuguese Wikipedia Community, and we will highlight the effectiveness of a decentralized, community-driven approach from the perspective of the two people that drove these initiatives.

The Wikidata Labs started as small, in-person gatherings and gradually scaled to include more remote participants and special guests, transitioning from a local to an international audience. Initially conducted in Portuguese, these sessions expanded to accommodate a broader, global community.



They started small, and in person, then it started scaling and changing approach as well: more remote, more participants, more special guests, and more international. - Érica Azzellini

Wikidata Lab at the 2019 edition of the WikidataCon Award Winner. Birgit Müller, CC-BY SA [on Wikimedia Commons](#).

The event format typically includes a lecture followed by a practical component. However, participation in the practical sessions waned over time due to their length and the level of interest in the hands-on activities.

“ ” A number of small gatherings of people (in different cities and locations) are far more effective to contribute content, ask questions and network than bigger groups where the interaction is centered in just one individual or small set of individuals. If in-person is not possible, because Wikidata is an international project, small working groups of people focused in specific areas and topics is a possible equivalent. - Eder Porto

While a basic guideline was provided, the goal was to encourage self-organization among participants. The first attempt involved staff involvement to guide the process, but the hope is that local community members will take the lead in future sessions.

A new strategy involved organizing gatherings in local libraries with modest goals. Initially aiming for just two participants per library, they ended up with at least ten participants per location across 15 to 16 regions, totaling approximately 160 participants.

“ ” This year, I'm trying new dates and activities in the Wikidata Labs, but I think that we need to revisit the initial Wikidata Labs and reroute our upcoming events more towards new editors and enthusiasts that we recently gathered: librarians love Wikidata! - Eder Porto

This approach proved highly successful, as libraries expressed interest in partnering with Wiki Movimento Brazil, opening up numerous opportunities for community building and partnerships. The cost was minimal, primarily covering coffee for participants.

“ ” In the long run, something big, very niche, and heavy on the training is not as effective as something small and self-organized. - Érica Azzellini

Two critical elements of the Wikidata Labs were community building and knowledge sharing, fostering a sense of connection and shared learning among participants.

These sessions made Wikidata more accessible, helping participants understand their potential impact and demystifying how to work with Wikidata.

“ ” *General feedback is that these sessions would make Wikidata more accessible and help people understand how to work with Wikidata, which is often scary. - Érica Azzellini*

They provided valuable networking opportunities, allowing community members to meet and interact with the people behind Wikidata.

“ ” *There is also a social component that entails networking and generally giving the community members the possibility to meet the people behind Wikidata. Community building and general knowledge sharing in a nutshell were the two most important elements. - Érica Azzellini*

The Wikidata Labs were not particularly welcoming to newcomers, as the topics covered were often very specific and not beginner-friendly. This issue was partly attributed to communication rather than the content itself.

The structured format, which included lectures and practical activities, required significant time investment from participants, which was not always feasible for everyone.

“ ” **Some mentioned challenges of Wikidata Labs**


I find it very difficult to introduce Wikidata to new Wikimedia editors. One motive is the inherently technical nature of Wikidata, dealing with declarations in triples instead of phrases and everything else. - Eder Porto

It was not particularly welcoming for newcomers, as the topics were very specific and not really beginner-friendly. Maybe more of a communication problem, rather than actual content-specific. In hindsight, the language or the way things were communicated might have not been particularly beginner-friendly. - Érica Azzellini

The main goal was to have an actual structured event, not just a superficial explanation: lecture + practical activities in breakout rooms meant a lot of time involvement from the participants and not everyone has the possibility. - Érica Azzellini

Additionally...

Another notable mention on this topic comes from Richard Knipel, Board Member of Wikimedia NYC and Wikimedian in Residence at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

 *We have tried to shift towards a local, in-person approach, and a particular focus on trying to map the communities. - Richard Knipel*

He also mentioned the success of spontaneous hacking nights for OpenStreetMap projects: these informal meetups, typically attracting 19 to 22 participants, foster a collaborative environment where individuals bring their laptops and work together throughout the night.

The sessions are open to both tech-savvy individuals and those with less experience, creating a dynamic mix of participants. This setup encourages networking and collaboration, allowing people to connect over a shared interest in OpenStreetMap and contribute to projects they enjoy.

The spontaneous and informal nature of these gatherings makes them particularly effective in fostering a sense of community and promoting skill-sharing among participants.

Theme: **Supporting events organizers**

When the participants were asked in which ways they believed they could be supported, as organizers and participants, a lot of interesting suggestions were made. From all of their answers, we identified four key areas where support is needed.

Funding

Participants emphasized the need for financial assistance to manage and run their events effectively. This support helps cover costs like venue rental, equipment, and catering, ensuring events can happen smoothly without financial strain.

Training Resources

There's a strong desire for access to educational materials and training sessions. Organizers want to enhance their skills in event planning, community management, and technical tools. Quality training empowers them to organize better events and engage their communities more effectively.

Swag and material resources

Participants highlighted the importance of receiving promotional items and useful resources. Swag items like branded merchandise and informational materials not only enhance the event experience but also promote community spirit and visibility.

♥ Supporting event organizers through funding

Funding is a critical element in supporting and sustaining community engagement and participation in various projects. Offering financial support through grants and scholarships help cover essential costs such as food and internet access. This financial assistance ensures that community members can participate without incurring personal expenses, thereby encouraging greater involvement and motivation.

“ ” Micro-grants would be appreciated -Sadik

Some participants noted that in the past, smaller grants were used effectively to cover basic needs such as food and extra security. These grants were relatively inexpensive yet significantly impactful. Knowing if such grants will be available in the future is crucial for planning and sustaining community activities

“ ” In the past, we used smaller grants, it would be useful to know if they were available for the future: it does not cost much, it would be basically for food or an extra security guard. In the past, we got the grants from the Wikimedia Foundation - Richard Knipel

Other users emphasized that providing money for essential needs like internet access and electricity can make participation less burdensome. If community members know they are sponsored for these basic needs, they might be more motivated to sacrifice their time, knowing they won't face additional personal expenses. This financial support can alleviate the complexities and challenges associated with unreliable infrastructure.

“ ” Does money -scholarship- solve the problem -Internet and Power Outages? Should anything else be provided? Currently, as of now, probably yes. Great majority of people have their own generator, but they have to fuel it. -Benedict Udeh

“ ” Since for one-day training we may not require USD500 which is minimum to get a rapid grant. And for online edit-a-thons/events if we get some smaller support the organizers can provide support for the participants to engage in the event in the forms of internet support as well as small token of appreciation in the form of gift cards -Jinoy

“ Providing money helps: if community members would know that they would be sponsored -Internet paid and provided, but also power - electricity - because it is messy and complicated- then you would be sacrificing only your time, and people might be more motivated. -Benedict Udeh

However, the process for distributing these scholarships needs to be efficient and straightforward. Users highlighted the complexity they often face to obtain funding for international events. Funding applications typically need to demonstrate tangible benefits to local communities. This requirement can complicate the application process, as organizers must align their proposals with the specific interests and expectations of funding bodies.

Moreover, the funding process can be cumbersome due to the need for detailed justifications and extensive documentation. Organizers must often provide comprehensive plans, including expected outcomes and potential benefits, which can be a significant administrative burden. This detailed preparation is necessary to ensure that the funding bodies understand the value and impact of the proposed activities.

“ There are situations where I may not receive funding, but I usually do as I only ask when I believe I have a high chance of receiving it. Normally, for these funding applications to Wikimedia Aotearoa New Zealand, they want to know what’s the benefit for New Zealand specifically. The issue arises when I am assisting other communities (for example botanists attending the International Botanical Congress) and this means the funding I might be asking for is not strictly related to New Zealand. In situations like this, the funding process is cumbersome, I had to go talk to three people in three different parts of the Wiki movement, and I only knew to do this because I knew them all personally. -Siobhan

In conclusion, financial support through grants and scholarships is vital for fostering community engagement and participation. By covering essential costs and simplifying the funding process, we can ensure broader and more effective involvement from community members. This support not only alleviates financial burdens but also encourages motivation and sustained contributions to various projects.

♥ Supporting event organizers through training resources

Providing detailed training resources, such as tutorials, guidelines, and knowledge-sharing sessions, both on the topic of “how to organize events” and on the content of the event itself, will equip organizers and participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to run successful events.

“ ” *I would love it if there were more resources: materials to use as a base that people can use to run their events (imagine a tutorial to run queries that is also translated to different events). ‘Teaching how to teach’ and tutorials that can be used. Materials also that help communities interact and share knowledge with each other. E.g., resources on how to run Edit-a-thon sessions, resources on how to organize events (maybe a very big portal with resources). Tutorials for specific topics according to the audiences: talking to students is different from talking to GLAMs. Different examples, use cases, context, languages, accessibility (people that can only contribute through their mobile phones, contributing offline...) - Érica Azzellini*

“ ” *Classes/knowledge sharing sessions on how to conduct Wikidata events (best practices in setting up streaming, etc.). - Raisha Abdillah*

“ ” *I will suggest useful guidelines, materials or tools that could help follow up new comers after an event dedicated to Wikidata could be improved and accessible in any language. Why not launch an organizer Lab to train Wikidata trainers and event organizers? -Salisouf*


“ ” *Video tutorials should be available in your mother tongue. - Akbarali*

“ ” *I believe more training for organizers, especially when there is the introduction of new features, will go a long way to help. - Hariet Bayel*

“ ” *It would be nice to have some support on a monthly basis or regularly. Let’s just say a new property is introduced, it would be nice to have some explanation and support in terms of content gaps that we have. - Benedict Udeh*

Supporting event organizers through providing material

Distributing Wikidata-themed swag like t-shirts, pens, and hats creates excitement and a sense of belonging among participants. These tokens of appreciation not only enhance the event experience but also serve as a motivational tool to increase engagement.

 *We really need WD-Swag: t-shirts, pens, hats... People really get excited when they receive this kind of present. - Sadik*

 *Participants need to get some swags. - Akbarali*

Theme: **Accessibility & Mobile-friendliness during events**


Accessibility for Wikidata is quite important, and on top of the known issues with accessing the internet in many parts of the world (weak or nonexistent connection, very expensive internet plans), participants have mentioned that they often struggle with editing Wikidata on mobile devices. This is particularly impactful during events like workshops and collaborative editing activities.

This section addresses two key points:

1. **Simplifying mobile editing:** Making it easier for people to edit Wikidata using their smartphones during events.
2. **Providing ongoing support:** Offering continuous help for those who primarily use their phones or need to edit offline.

Considering that 70% of people from the Global Majority access the internet exclusively through mobile devices, optimizing mobile infrastructure and prioritizing mobile-friendly tools is essential. This priority, highlighted as the 7th point in the [Global Majority Wikimedia Technology Priorities manifesto](#), emphasizes breaking down barriers that hinder access and contribution to free knowledge.

As Érica Azzellini also pointed out, mobile access is essential for these contributors, making it imperative that our platforms are mobile-friendly.

 *(In our past Wikidata Labs) there were people that can only contribute through their mobile phones or contributing offline. -Érica Azzellini*

By focusing on these areas, Wikimedia Deutschland aims to make sure everyone, no matter their technology or situation, can contribute effectively to Wikidata. Incorporating the perspective of the Global Majority into tech development ensures inclusivity and that Wikimedia Deutschland reflects the diverse experiences and knowledge systems of the world.



Community members editing Wikidata on mobile. Jason Krüger, CC-BY SA [on Wikimedia Commons](#).

Users mentioned that the focus for Wikimedia Deutschland should be on enhancing the mobile phone experience. This approach is not only more sustainable but also aligns with the existing habits and resources of the contributors. Making it easier to edit on mobile could significantly improve participation and efficiency.

“ Providing laptops would not solve the problem. Maybe the focus should be on their mobile phone: in terms of sustainability, if we could make it easier to edit on mobile. - Benedict Udeh

This limitation in terms of mobile-friendliness and accessibility is particularly acute in regions like Brazil -where mobile devices account for at least 70% of internet access- or India. The inability of beginners to perform simple edits on Wikidata due to platform constraints is a major barrier to engagement and contribution.

“ We do not have any means to properly edit Wikidata via mobile devices. In Brazil alone, but I know that this is a general reality among other Global South communities, mobile devices are the main (at least 70%) means people use to access the internet.

The ability to do a simple edit in Wikidata by a beginner is hindered by the platform itself. - Eder Porto

“ ” Most of the users especially from India who contribute to Wikimedia projects are contributing through their mobile devices. When it comes to Wikidata, most of these users face difficulties in contributing to Wikidata from mobile. There are very few tools that support mobile editing but need some more user-friendly enhancements. So one of the most required features is to have a dedicated app or mobile interface where users can edit Wikidata statements from their mobile devices. - Jinoy

“ ” Mobile tools/application needs to be developed - Akbarali

The potential benefits of an efficient and easy-to-navigate mobile interface are many, as such a development would not only flatten the learning curve for newcomers but also engage a broader audience. Users who primarily contribute via mobile in other projects could be encouraged to extend their efforts to Wikidata if the platform were more accessible.

“ ” I think that the development of an efficient and easy-to-navigate mobile interface would help to flatten the learning curve for newcomers, and possibly engage more others that contribute mainly via mobile in other projects - Eder Porto

In conclusion, addressing the mobile-friendliness of Wikidata is crucial for expanding participation and inclusivity: participants in workshops and collaborative editing activities have highlighted the need for better mobile editing capabilities.

By developing robust mobile tools and interfaces, we can support a diverse range of contributors, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their device, can engage meaningfully with the platform.

Theme: **Partnerships with local institutions**

Another interesting finding that was highlighted during the research is the idea of creating partnerships with local institutions: based on interviews with key community members from various regions, it's evident that local partnerships with institutions could play a crucial role in fostering engagement and growth within the Wikidata community. The collective insights from these participants show that nurturing local partnerships with libraries, academic institutions, and local government entities is very important for the sustained engagement and growth of the community.

Let's dive into the different takes from the community members:

Users from the Wiki Movimento Brazil highlights how gathering in local libraries exceeded expectations, turning modest goals into substantial participation and creating strong, positive relationships with libraries. This decentralized approach, although specific to Brazil, shows the effectiveness of local partnerships in enhancing community engagement.

" " New strategy that we are trying to push forward: gather in local libraries (very low goal, only 2 people) and work together. We ended up having 10 people at least per library and 15 to 16 regions (for a total of 160 participants). After the event the response was overwhelmingly positive: participants liked it, libraries wanted to partner with us and it has opened up a lot of opportunities for community building and also creating partnerships. The cost is also very low because we are only offering people a coffee, pretty much. Running distributed events. Not known if other affiliates are doing that as well. It was very specific to Wiki Movimento Brazil. - Érica Azzellini

Another user reinforces this by emphasizing the success of small, focused gatherings in different cities as part of the "Every Book, Its Reader" campaign. These smaller groups facilitate better content contribution and networking, indicating that partnerships with local venues and institutions are essential for effective engagement.

" " If in-person is not possible, because Wikidata is an international project, small working groups of people focused in specific areas and topics is a possible equivalent. I would say that we are always trying to find better ways to engage more people and contribute more content to Wikidata. This year, I'm trying new dates and activities in the Wikidata Labs, but I think that we need to revisit the initial Wikidata Labs and reroute our upcoming events more towards new editors and enthusiasts that we recently gathered (librarians love Wikidata!). - Eder Porto

Another user from Wikimedia NYC adds to this by discussing the role of local events like edit-a-thons and translate-a-thons, often held in collaboration with libraries and academic institutions: these events not only bring diverse communities together but also highlight the importance of local support. Integrating larger datasets into Wikidata remains a challenge, however, the positive response from local institutions and the focus on mapping communities through in-person events underscore the potential of these partnerships.

“ ” WikiConference North America from some years ago was virtual and more recently we have tried to shift towards a local, in-person approach, and a particular focus on trying to map the communities. This helps us network with the librarian community of NYC, and the city government supports the open data community a little bit. - Richard Knipel

Another user from the Igbo Wikidata Community suggests that sponsoring local communities, especially in under-resourced regions, can significantly help in community growth. He also talked about flexibility in event formats and tools used, which can facilitate better engagement with local institutions.

“ ” Creating partnership with local organizers and community members. For instance, when a Wikidata conference is happening, we should have side events organized by local African communities, using their preferred videoconference tools, and supported financially by the main organizers. There could still be some more general sessions where people still get to connect and interact with each other. This also helps grow the community locally. - Benedict Udeh

Finally, a member of Wikimedia Taiwan spoke on this topic as well, highlighting the importance of connecting with the academic community in Taiwan:

“ ” Wikidata is more relative to scholars, librarians, or academic fields. At least in Taiwan we should have more connections with these groups, which are currently not available by the community way of running events. - Dennis Chen

5 Strategic Opportunities

Unlocking Potential for Enhanced Community Support

The main ideas below come from our research findings and overall results.

These suggestions are based on many conversations with participants, especially with help from Léa Lacroix and Mattia Capozzi Sorrentino.

They underscore the importance of maintaining an ecosystem of thematic online events and local onsite events is crucial: our research showed that this approach ensures that participants can benefit from both the broad reach of online events and the deep community connections fostered by local gatherings.

There is also a clear need for enhanced support for event organizers, particularly through increased funding and resources.

Moreover, a focus on mobile accessibility emerges as a critical area, reflecting the predominant use of mobile devices among our community members.

Finally, engagement and retention strategies are essential for sustaining involvement, alongside efforts to improve content accessibility to foster inclusivity and effective communication within our global community.

Let's take a closer look at each of these opportunities.

Opportunity: **Maintaining an ecosystem of events**


To get the best out of both online and in-person events, it might be important to balance them. This approach improves engagement and accessibility, and strengthens community connections.

Suggestion: **Support to the event format combo online + in-person**


Combining online and in-person events might serve a diverse audience: the research showed that online events offer global access, while in-person events create deeper community connections.

Recording sessions helps with different time zones and internet issues. Small, local meetups build closer community bonds.


Partnering with local libraries and community centers can also boost participation and foster a sense of impact.

 *People seemed to be more interested in local, smaller events rather than the bigger ones. Or maybe a combination of both... This might be just a guess around involvement, but the small events seem to be much more engaging. -Érica Azzellin*

In-person events often lead to higher engagement and better outcomes because of face-to-face interactions. They provide great networking opportunities and a collaborative atmosphere. However, they can be complex and expensive to organize, and language barriers can be an issue.

 *We are currently experimenting with in-person events in Brazil for this year, although previously the events were rather remote. The issue with these remote events was a clear decrease of the engagement overall. - Érica Azzellini*

Online events remove geographical barriers, allowing people from all over the world to join. They are cost-effective and sessions can be recorded for convenience. Despite these benefits, online events often face technical problems and lower engagement compared to in-person events.

 *My take away from that particular event (WikidataLab) is that, quantitative and qualitative speaking, in-person Wikidata events have more engagement and results than hybrid or purely online. -Eder Porto*

On the topic of hybrid events and for a slightly different perspective, we recommend reading the slides of a session held at Wikimania 2024 by Mike Peel et. al.: [Equitable hybrid approaches for all Wikimedia events](#).

Practically, there is not just a one-directional approach to solve this issue and support this general decentralized approach. Below, we will start tackling this issue and break it down, although in a nutshell this means:

- **Support event organizers with grants**
- **Work on accessibility on different levels**
- **Enhance participants engagement and retention**

Opportunity: **Support event organizers with grants**

As highlighted in the report, many organizers find the grant application process cumbersome and time-consuming. In response, here are suggestions to make grant requests more accessible and less burdensome, aiming to foster greater participation and successful event planning.





Suggestion: **Decentralize grants**

The community has voiced a desire for a more supportive and locally-driven approach to funding Wikimedia projects. The idea is to empower local hubs and groups that best understand their communities. These groups could lead in deciding how funds are distributed, ensuring resources align closely with local needs for maximum impact. The goal, by decentralizing grants, is to make funding more accessible and less bureaucratic.



GLAM Micro Grant

As an alternative to a central fund (WMF), local Wikidata groups would receive support from Wikimedia Deutschland as well with the autonomy to allocate resources where they are most needed. This approach allows for tailored support, whether for small edit-a-thons or larger community initiatives.


-  *Micro-grants would be appreciated. - Sadik*
-  *If you could provide us with some support -scholarship- then people do not have to pay with money out of their own pockets. - Benedict Udeh*
-  *For online edit-a-thons/events... if we get some smaller support the organizers can provide support for the participants to engage in the event in the forms of internet support as well as small token of appreciation in the form of gift cards - Jinoy*
-  *Providing money helps: if community members would know that they would be sponsored, people might be more motivated. - Benedict Udeh*

Suggestion:  **Provide guidelines for grant requests**

There's also a clear need for more direct support mechanisms. Workshops, mentorship programs, and clear guidelines would assist organizers in navigating the grant process more smoothly. Experienced community members could provide valuable insights and assistance throughout the funding cycle. One way to go about making the grant request easier could be providing clear guidelines and templates to help applicants present their proposals effectively.

Additionally, providing workshops or webinars on how to apply for grants, including tips on writing successful applications and managing funds would be crucial for those that lack the experience and knowledge to do so.

Another possibility would be offering mentorship from experienced grant recipients to guide new applicants through the process.

 *The funding process is cumbersome, I had to go talk to three people overall, and I knew them all personally. - Siobhan*

Opportunity: **Work on accessibility to positively impact events**

Improving accessibility in Wikidata is crucial, particularly for events like workshops and collaborative editing activities where participants often rely on mobile devices. Participants have pointed out the need for better mobile editing capabilities.

Suggestion: **Striving for better editing of Wikidata on mobile**

Participants in events have frequently mentioned the importance of making mobile editing simpler and more intuitive also during events. Enhancing mobile usability involves supporting all essential editing functions, optimizing navigation, reducing the steps required to make edits, and ensuring compatibility with various mobile browsers. Improving mobile accessibility will positively impact these events by making it easier for everyone to contribute.

 *There were people that could only contribute through their mobile phones or by contributing offline. - Érica*

 *The focus should be on their mobile phone: in terms of sustainability, if we could make it easier to edit on mobile. - Benedict Udeh*

 *Mobile tools/applications need to be developed. - Akbarali*

Opportunity: **Enhance participants engagement & retention**

Keeping participants engaged with Wikidata events is crucial for the community's long-term growth and sustainability.




WikidataCon audience by Denis Schroeder, CC-BY SA [on Wikimedia Commons](#)

Addressing these suggestions can create a more vibrant and resilient community, where participants feel valued, supported, and continuously motivated to contribute.


By recognizing achievements, fostering competition, and providing ongoing training and mentorship, we can enhance both engagement and retention in Wikidata events. Based on our research, the following suggestions were made by participants when asked about improvements and suggestions:

Suggestion:  **Competitive and engaging elements with supervision**

Introducing a competitive element to events could foster a sense of excitement and motivation: competitions, challenges, or leaderboards can create a dynamic and engaging environment, encouraging participants to stay active during activities and events. However, **it is crucial to ensure that competition does not prioritize quantity over quality**. In the past, we have found that this approach often led to participants rushing and poor-quality work: therefore, if introduced, contests and challenges must always be supervised by experienced editors to prevent such issues and ensure that the competition is integrated with particular care.


 *The competitive aspect of the editing work done with the Parliament of Ghana has shown us that it is very easy to teach people how to work with the data if done in a certain way and this also helped us connect with more people. - Sadik*


 *Games are a groundbreaking tool to introduce Wikidata to newbies. - Ranjithsiji*

 *More visualization tools, More Wikidata based games, Visual Query tool, Add small pieces of data using simple clicks or simple decision making. Also much more improved Wikishootme tool based on wikidata. These things make wikidata much more engaging to newbies and students. - Ranjithsiji*

Suggestion:  **Supporting communities creating a theme for events**


A well-planned theme strategy can cater to the diverse interests of the community, ensuring that both new and existing editors find value in the events.


 *More thematic activities to be planned in advance so that editors and new editors can engage. For this we need a resource / theme plan. - Akbarali*

 *Find topics people are interested in learning about, or contributing to, and build your presentation or workshop around that. - Eder Porto*

Suggestion:  **Supporting communities designing a series of events**


A series of events, combining virtual and in-person elements, and focusing on small, localized gatherings can enhance engagement and participation.

 *Having a series of events: Virtual Introduction weeks before - Conference Workshop on the planned time - Virtual Workshop after. This means you can actually allow for more people to manage their time, hence you can give them an opportunity for them to join either before or after. I am not sure about improving the engagement, as I really like how the Wikidata events are run. - Siobhan*

 *A number of small gatherings of people (in different cities and locations) are far more effective to contribute content, ask questions and network than bigger groups where the interaction is centered in just one individual or small set of individuals. If in-person is not possible, because Wikidata is an international project, small working groups of people focused in specific areas and topics is a possible equivalent. - Eder Porto*

Suggestion:  **Fostering a sense of impact**

Emphasizing the impact and outcomes of the participants' contribution is very important. Additionally, framing each event within the context of a long-term project, participants can better understand the significance of their contributions and see how their work fits into a larger vision.

 *(It would be effective) to ask for impact and outcomes, both of this specific work that we are doing as editors, and of the person's or group's work in general. Ask for the bigger picture, in what frame/long term project this event is taking place. - Siobhan*

 *General feedback on the Wikidata Labs is that these sessions would make (...) people would realize their impact. - Érica Azzellini*

Suggestion:  **Developing a Train-the-trainer strategy**

Empowering local leaders through "train-the-trainer" models is an effective way to provide sustained support. By training a core group of local leaders, who then pass on their knowledge to others, the community reduces its reliance on central organizers.

" " Imagine having a train-the-trainer approach: this would be so helpful because when people need advice or training they do not come to us anymore, they can directly go to our community leaders. - Sadik

" " On the topic of supporting event organizers, why not launch an organizer lab to train Wikidata trainers and event organizers? - Saliousoft

" " We are thinking about some small training program for the community in the next 1-2 months for providing training on some tools that help in contributing to Wikidata. In 2020 during the pandemic: we had organized some events online but this time we are thinking about some offline workshops. -Jinoy

" " We definitely need training related to Wikidata tools: which tools can be useful to our community and how to use them. - Sadik

Suggestion:  **Designing mentorship programs**

Pairing experienced members with newcomers through mentorship programs can significantly enhance retention. Mentors provide guidance, answer questions, and help new participants navigate the complexities of Wikidata.

" " It would be nice to have some support on a monthly basis or regularly. Let's just say a new property is introduced, it would be nice to have some explanation and support in terms of content gaps that we have. - Benedict Udeh

" " Also, a mentorship program where some community leaders would receive training and then be able to get back to our community would be nice and very effective. - Sadik

" " We should talk more about scripts and gadgets that experienced users have on their interface.. - Raisha Abdillah

6 Conclusions

Strategic Directions for Future Wikidata Events

Deciding the best direction for the future of Wikidata events requires a broader strategic alignment and conversations to better address the evolving needs of the diverse community, to ensure that “The technical, social, and financial infrastructure of Free Knowledge [is] resilient and sustainable”.

Events format

See more details in the section [→ Events format](#)

The key conclusions from the research emphasize the need for a balanced, inclusive, and sustainable approach to organizing events. While the community agrees that onsite events are essential, we believe that **combining several models** based on the needs can ensure more engagement from a diverse crowd, both at an international and a local level.

Supporting events organizers

See more details in the section [→ Support event organizers](#)

Streamlining the **funding application process** is crucial to empower event organizers: decentralizing grants and providing clear guidelines can alleviate administrative burdens, making it easier for organizers to secure necessary resources. Open conversations about funding allocation and resource management are essential to support community-driven initiatives.

Accessibility & mobile-friendliness and their impact on events

See more details in the section [→ Work on accessibility to positively impact events](#)

Enhancing **mobile-friendliness** is crucial for making Wikidata events accessible to all community members, especially those from underrepresented regions. Participants have highlighted the importance of developing user-friendly tools and interfaces to

support participation from diverse technological backgrounds. Simplifying mobile editing and providing regular updates will positively impact event participation. Additionally, implementing strategies such as thematic events and mentorship programs can boost engagement and retention, sustaining long-term involvement. Recognizing achievements and offering continuous support are key to maintaining an active and vibrant community.

Partnerships with local institutions

See more details in the section [→ Partnerships with local institutions](#)

Finally, encouraging **local events and partnerships with institutions** can strengthen community bonds and foster regional growth. At the same time, maintaining a **global perspective** ensures that the broader Wikidata community remains interconnected and collaborative.

In conclusion, addressing the future of Wikidata events does not have a one-size-fits-all solution; it requires a multifaceted and systemic approach. Alignment with [Wikimedia Deutschland's Strategic Direction](#) is crucial to give the Wikidata community the means to form a **strong network** made of **autonomous, empowered and active nodes** that will continuously share and organize free knowledge for and beyond the Wikimedia projects.

7 Appendix

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Find below the full list of questions we followed for the interviews:

- Can you tell us about your involvement in Wikidata-related events or activities so far?
 - Could you share any experiences attending, hosting, or participating?
 - What are some events you've been a part of, and what roles have you played?

- Could you share a recent experience of hosting or attending a Wikidata event?
 - What were some highlights or memorable moments from that event?
 - What aspects do you feel could have been improved?
 - What elements of past events do you believe were particularly successful?

- Based on your experiences, what specific changes or enhancements would you suggest to make future Wikidata events more engaging or effective?
 - Are there any strategies or approaches you've encountered elsewhere that you think could address some of the challenges faced in Wikidata events?

- In what ways do you think organizers and participants could be supported when it comes to Wikidata-related events or activities?
 - Are there any resources or tools that could potentially improve the success of such events?

- Looking ahead, do you have any plans or ideas for organizing Wikidata-related activities or events in the upcoming year?
 - As Wikidata's birthday approaches, are there any special initiatives or celebrations you're considering to mark the occasion?
 - What are your thoughts on future events or activities related to Wikidata outreach and engagement?