Narrative of Change

In order to fulfill the strategic direction of becoming the essential support system of the ecosystem of free knowledge, the Wikimedia Movement must have the people and the resources required for it to thrive and grow. Ensuring the sustainability of the Movement is the requirement that will enable all other strategic recommendations.

For the Movement to grow, we require cultural changes and shifts: we must recognize that our Movement is people-centered and make changes that address the needs and challenges of present participants, while simultaneously recognizing the needs of future communities. For emerging and future communities to feel welcome, the Movement must embrace inclusion and equity as principles, and actively work to remove barriers and improve users' experience. Ensuring the safety and security of all contributors will be crucial aspects of this cultural change as well.

Cultural change will only be possible if there is openness for redistribution of current power structures in the offline community and a Movement-wide recognition of our accountability to each other. A more distributed leadership, based upon the principles of subsidiarity and self-management, allowing those affected by decisions to participate and make decisions (particularly about governance and resources), will redistribute power throughout the Movement. Redistribution will only be successful with a significant investment in skills development and capacity building - and this, in turn, will require new and different thinking about how resources are allocated and efficiently used. More equitable decision-making will also require a more deliberate focus on knowledge management, coordination, and collaboration at all levels of the Movement.

As new communities engage, the Movement will be able to include, welcome, and adapt to additional perspectives that help expand the representation of human knowledge. New communities and a better understanding of the cultural contexts of existing communities will bring more diverse content and new formats of capturing knowledge, that we will need to understand and integrate into the range of our content productions and projects. The production of high-quality content has always been a focus and will continue to be. This is an opportunity to consider the impact of content more strategically and to innovate how it is collected, presented, and consumed.

And finally, the Movement we envision must be self-aware, dynamic, and adaptive. Only then can we have the global impact we aspire to with adequate scalability for continued growth and becoming the essential infrastructure of the ecosystem of free knowledge.

Promote Sustainability and Resilience

We need to be sustainable in terms of human and financial resources. Only with committed volunteers, staff members, and projects which are easily recognized and trusted to attract users and donors, will we be able to bring about the changes we aspire to make.
For this, we must support people: a dynamic and often changing volunteer base able to bring new ideas, leaders, and methods for inclusion, and staff that provides the support systems and aid communities in building long-term partnerships to allow our outreach to expand. We must empower and support local groups and all stakeholders to tap into existing and new ways of acquiring funds and other resources and become more self-sufficient.

Create Cultural Change for Inclusive Communities

We need to make cultural change founded in Movement-wide standards for an inclusive, welcoming, safe, and collaborative environment that enables sustainability and future growth through extensive consultation with the involved communities.

Based on that consultation, we must create reporting processes and enforcement mechanisms for those standards, which respect community autonomy as much as possible but include safeguards for when a community consistently fails to apply the standards. These mechanisms need to be evaluated to test their effectiveness in bringing equitable opportunities for participation and diversity.

Improve Use Experience

We need to continually improve the design of our platforms to enable everyone—whatever their gender, culture, technological background, or physical and mental abilities—to enjoy a fluid, effective, and positive experience during both the consultation and contribution to knowledge throughout the Wikimedia ecosystem.

The strategic direction also states that “anyone who shares our vision should able to join us,” so we must strive towards a reality where people are not held back in any way by related barriers or unaddressed needs by our technology and people. We must encourage communities to work towards shaping the projects to match the needs of those who are using them as knowledge consumers, along with those who are not yet participating as contributors.

Provide for Safety and Security

We must ensure contributors have the proper conditions and resources enabling them to work without having their personal and communal security compromised. Any issue related to the safety of free knowledge contributors in one community will be considered a matter of utmost importance to the whole Movement.

We must provide policies and procedures for all stakeholders’ protection, based upon a contextual evaluation adapted to varying environments. These need to ensure participants have adequate safeguards to prevent and react to threatening situations. Necessary resources must be made accessible for all stakeholders to be able to deploy the infrastructure needed to protect them in their context.

Ensure Equity in Decision-Making

We need to ensure equity in decision-making at all levels. The Movement is composed of communities and individuals from all over the world. This diversity and richness of perspectives is essential in moving towards knowledge equity, which can only be achieved by “focussing our efforts on the knowledge and communities that have been left out by structures of power and privilege.”

We have made a commitment to “welcome people from every background to build strong and diverse communities.” Hence, we consider that empowering these people in current and future communities is
essential on our path towards the future and the well-being of our Movement. This empowerment includes sharing responsibilities and ensuring equitable opportunities for participation in decision-making. Inclusive growth and diversification requires a cultural change founded on more equitable processes and representative structures.

To realize these goals, we must create new structures to enable the distribution of power and resources and to represent all the stakeholders and legitimize decisions that affect them. The new structures are being proposed after assessing the functions and impact of the existing structures. These structures need not begin in full force during the implementation of the Movement Strategy and can be rolled out in a gradual and emergent manner with consultation and after more involved discussions with the stakeholders.

This recommendation is structured in subsections, which are founded on the premise of contextualized consultation in an equitable process with broad and diverse stakeholder participation guiding all decision-making and allocation actions:

- Establish a common framework for decision-making
- Enable equitable representation in global decision-making
- Enable the empowerment of local communities
- Participative resource allocation
- Open pathways to power positions

Foster and Develop Distributed Leadership

We must recognize and invest in current and future leadership development to ensure the Movement’s growth in an equitable and sustainable way across all communities. We envision a Movement built by qualified, well-trained, socially- and technically-skilled individuals from different backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the global communities.

To achieve this goal, we must train, support, and retain Movement leaders who reflect their local communities. Then, we need to actively recruit, encourage, and develop new leaders to ensure diversity and distribution of power in leadership positions. We also need to encourage each community to plan and allocate resources, tools, and information for fostering and developing leadership both at the local and global levels.

Invest in Skill Development

We need to invest in skills development empowering all of our communities to grow equitably, thrive, and continuously adapt to upcoming challenges. To equitably develop around the world, we must reinforce capacities for more offline-focused activities, such as advocacy, partnership-building, fundraising, leadership, and project management.

We must invest in both individuals and partner organizations to develop the indispensable technical skills needed to contribute, as well as people-centered skills, such as communication, conflict resolution, and intercultural dialogue, to enable the cultural change we envision. This requires various methods, among them, a platform that is equitable, transparent, and contextualized, relying on distributed knowledge and expertise.
Manage Internal Knowledge
We must make the internal knowledge of the Movement easy to capture, discover, adapt, and consume by all stakeholders to facilitate both individual skill development and growth in an equitable way across all communities.

All the internal knowledge produced in the Movement belongs to it, and we must ensure its findability and usability by any participant. We must establish a knowledge base for internal knowledge, dedicated staff for content curation (including discoverability and quality assurance) and user support, supplemented with a service/database of peers for matchmaking.

Coordinate Across Stakeholders
We must enable coordination among all the various stakeholders to ensure our alignment and to achieve our goals. Coordination is the essential backbone functioning for the Movement we envision.

We must develop a practice of cooperation and collaboration among the different stakeholders to advance towards more equitable decision-making. Coordination must be facilitated by Movement structures, as well as technological solutions and platforms that take into account the different participants’ needs in context and the internal knowledge of the Movement.

Prioritize Topics for Impact
We must consider our great responsibility. As a Movement, we need to conceptualize our content not just in terms of quantity, but also in terms of which kinds may have more useful impact globally.

For this, we must track and understand how we impact knowledge consumers’ lives, prioritize initiatives and areas of content so as to maximize that impact, and build the capability to protect it when necessary. This shift requires a transformation of our culture and practices in the way we evaluate the content and the creation of supporting tools.

Innovate in Free Knowledge
We need to expand the range of our free knowledge projects constantly. We have no way of knowing if textual, encyclopedic content will continue to be valued and fulfill the needs of knowledge consumers, just as we do not always include the knowledge of some marginalized communities.

By innovating in different content formats and technologies, that are and will be used in the future, along with experimenting with policies for knowledge inclusion, we can create new projects and adapt current ones to encompass content we do not cover yet to stay relevant on the Internet and aim at knowledge equity.

Evaluate, Iterate and Adapt
We need to continually evaluate our progress toward our internal and external goals to be able to dynamically iterate, adapt, and upgrade our socio-technical processes and structures. This will allow us to remain flexible in dynamic contexts and to ensure our programs and actions are well-directed and efficient.
We must evaluate all the areas, including content coverage, community and governance diversity and inclusivity, skills development, partnership impact, technology efficiency, and platforms’ usability and accessibility. Results must be widely and clearly communicated across the Movement to increase self-awareness and accountability among all stakeholders, allowing us to adapt our strategies accordingly.

Plan Infrastructure Scalability

We need to constantly and consistently evaluate, plan and upscale our infrastructure so that all the Movement stakeholders are able to participate. Our infrastructure encompasses the technological platforms and processes for areas such as advocacy, capacity building, or partnerships.

We must create a fluid ecosystem so that our infrastructure serves our needs as we grow. In this sense, to bring about significant change, planning infrastructure scalability requires consideration of risk management and assessment, ensuring inclusive decision-making spaces and enabling coordination, establishing protocols and roles and responsibilities, and investing sufficient resources in implementation.