Wikimedia Organization Board Governance Survey Results

August 2014
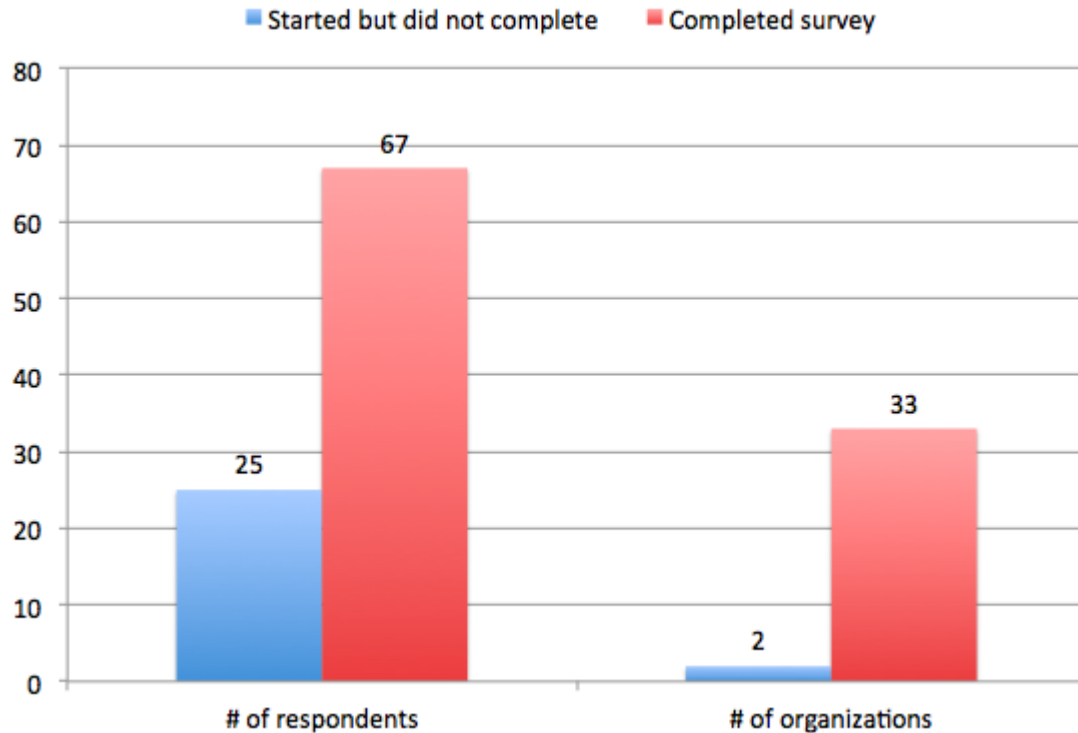Learning & Evaluation, WMF Grantmaking

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Wikimedia_Board_Governance_Survey
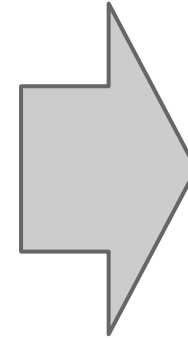
Summary of responses

- Organizations have an average of 8 members on their boards, though board size varies from 4 to 17
  - Board members are generally filled through an election/selection combination
  - Board seats are up for re-election/selection primarily on a 1-2 year cycle

- Overall, boards spend the most time on **program execution and monitoring, fundraising from WMF, and annual planning**
  - This varies significantly by group dependent on budget size - larger budget organizations with staff spend more time on visioning/strategy, annual planning, and financial oversight
  - Smaller budget groups spend a lot of time on communication and program execution, but not as much on monitoring or strategic planning

- Across different budget sizes, most organizations feel **more mentorship and/or sharing of learning among other Wikimedia organizations** would make them more effective
  - As organizations get larger, they increasingly need tools to measure effectiveness, likely because of a close linkage with receiving funds from WMF

- Organizations are most interested in learning about **program monitoring and fundraising** from non-Wikimedia sources

33 of 41 Wikimedia organizations responded with information about their boards
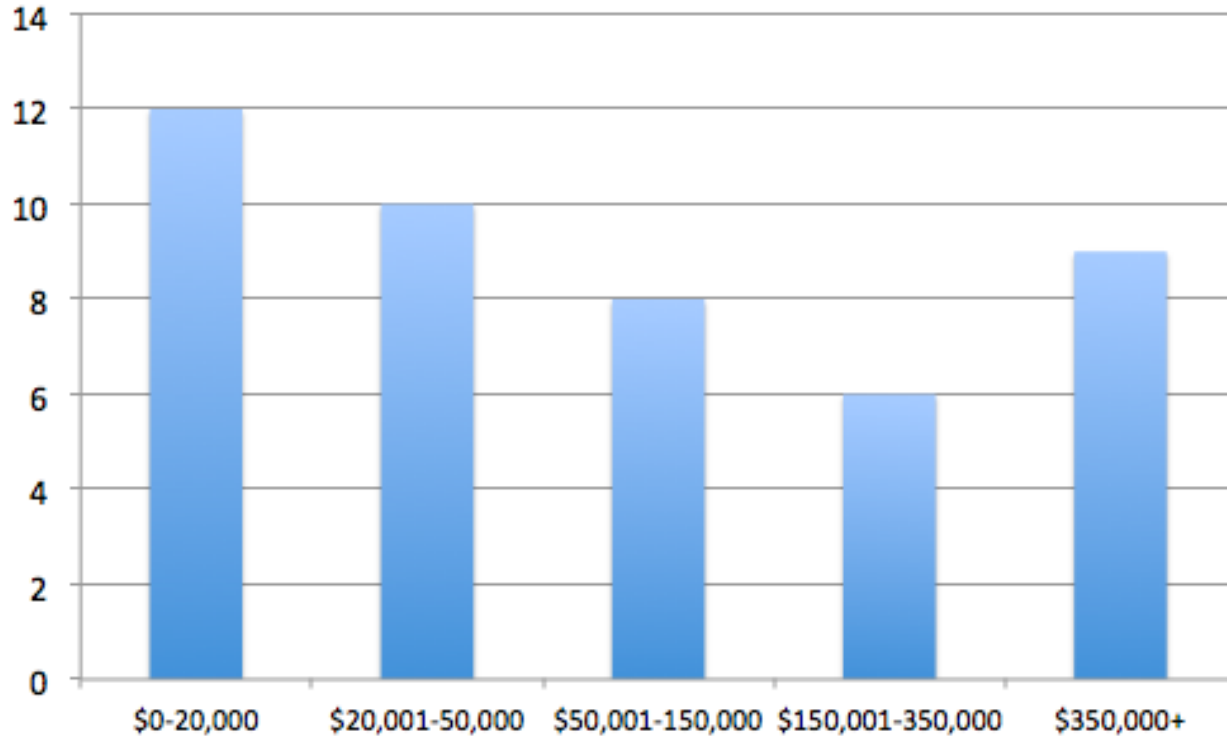

Note: 33 includes only those who responded to the full survey; 35 orgs took some portion of the survey

Average responses per organization = 2.6

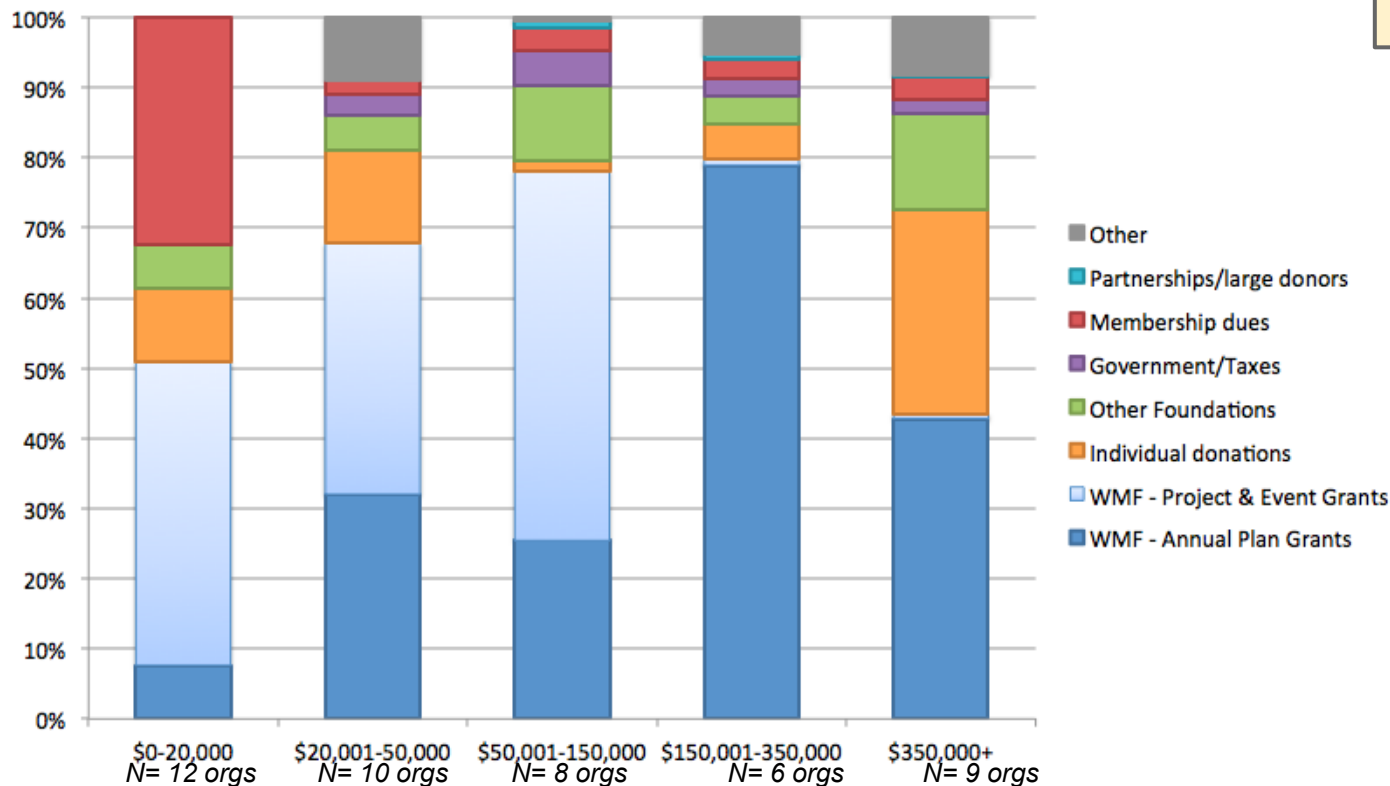# Survey respondents represented Wikimedia organizations across a spectrum of budgets

Number of organizations responding by budget

Note: Answers were inconsistent across organizations, which is why N > 33

WMF is the primary funder, though the smallest orgs receive 30% from membership dues and the largest from donations

Percent of total funding by funding stream, by org budget
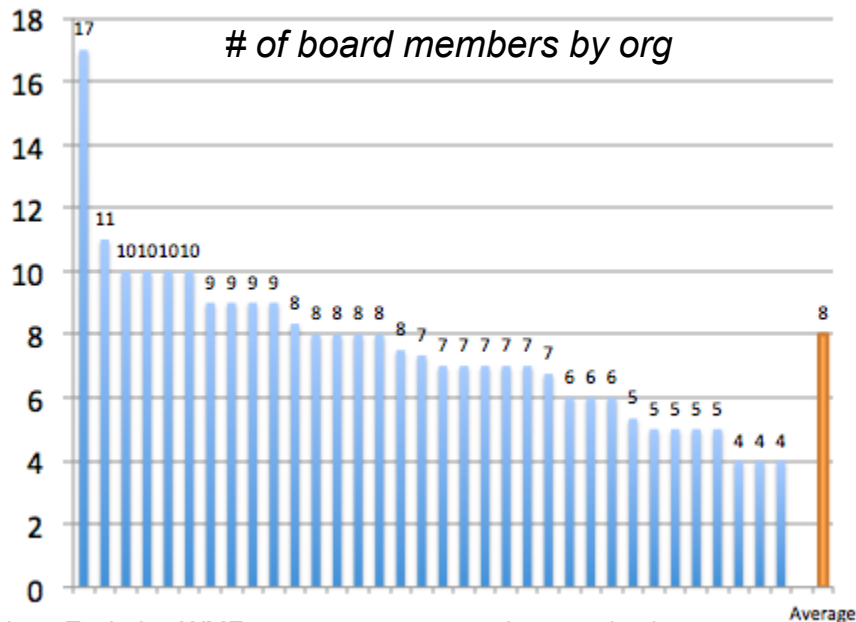
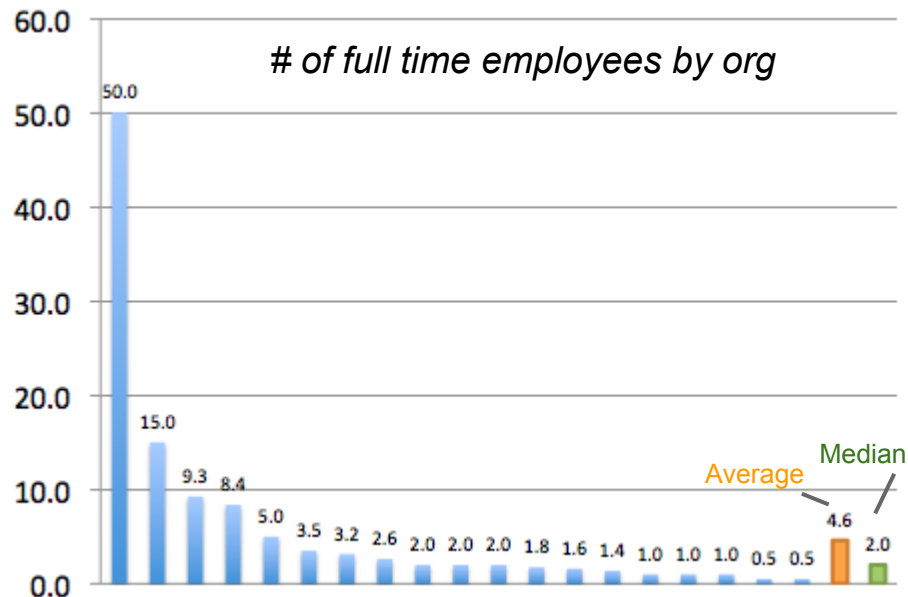Note: Excludes Wikimedia Foundation Board responses

Orgs on average have 8 board members; ~60% of orgs have staff

8 board members on average	20 orgs reported staff, with a median of 2 FTEs per org

# of board members by org
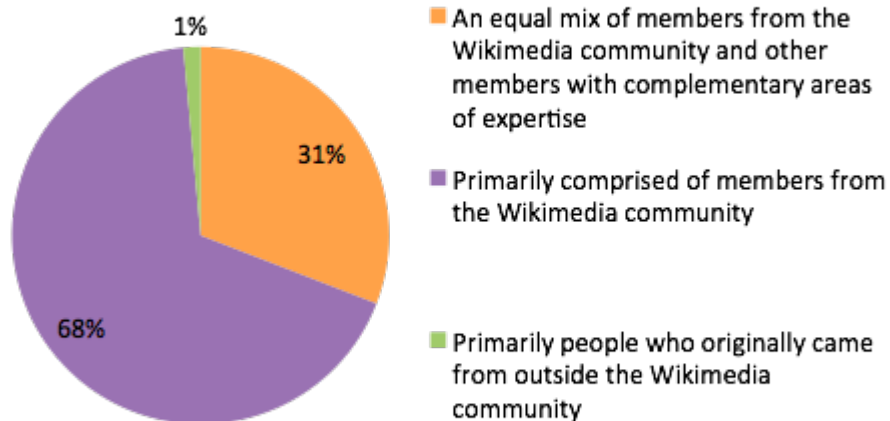
# of full time employees by org

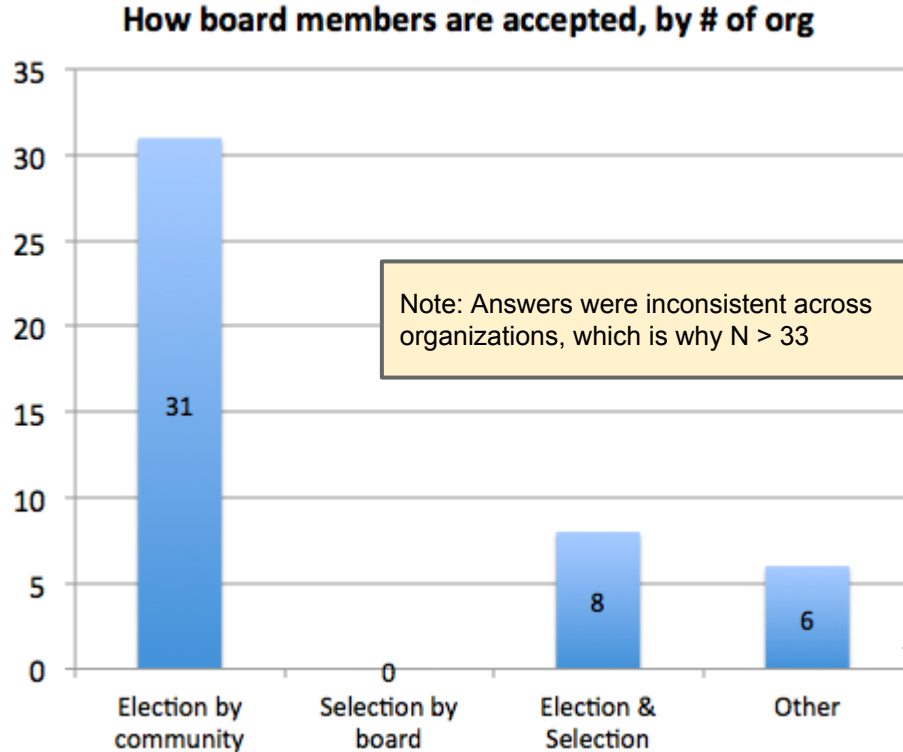Note: Excludes WMF; averages responses by organization

Regardless of board size, most respondents report boards are comprised mostly of Wikimedians

Which best describes your current board of directors/ trustees?

- An equal mix of members from the Wikimedia community and other members with complementary areas of expertise (31%)
- Primarily comprised of members from the Wikimedia community (68%)
- Primarily people who originally came from outside the Wikimedia community (1%)

	Equal mix	Wikimedians	Outside Wikimedia	N
4 board members	50%	50%		4
5 board members	14%	86%		7
6 board members	38%	62%		13
7 board members	20%	80%		15
8 board members	22%	78%		9
9 board members	50%	50%		8
10 board members	50%	38%	13%	8
11 board members	0%	100%		1
17 board members	0%	100%		1

Most orgs select board members through a community election process

How board members are accepted, by # of org

Note: Answers were inconsistent across organizations, which is why N > 33

- Election by community: 31
- Selection by board: 0
- Election & Selection: 8
- Other: 6

"Volunteering to serve"

"Co-option"

"The first board members are selected. The subsequent will be elected."
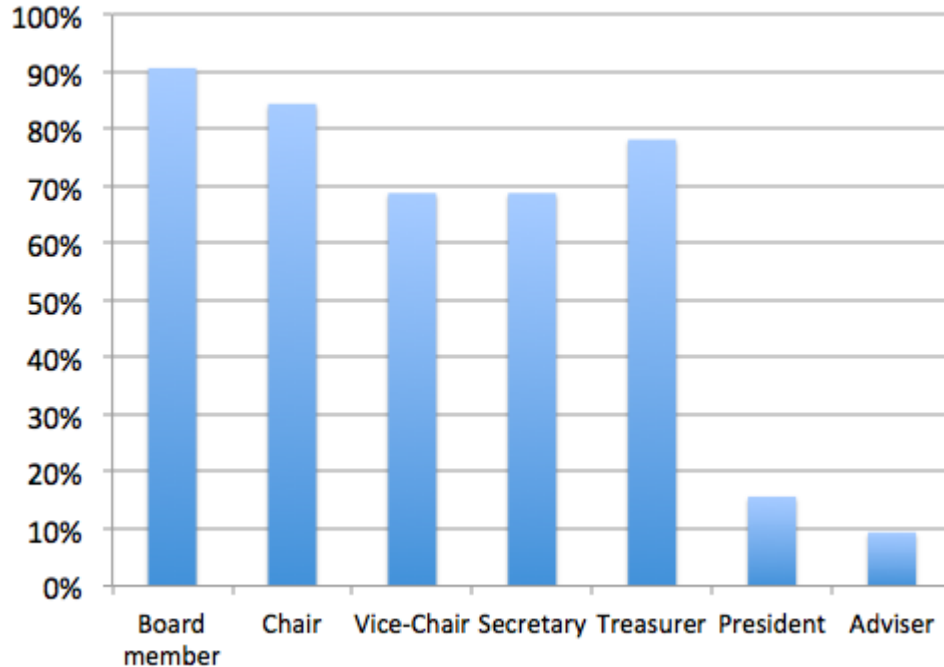
"Election by community of contributors"

"Selection by assembly"

"Two are selected by board but voted yes/no by community"

Wikimedia boards across the world have a variety of different positions

% of boards with position

Other positions (written in)

- Fiscal council
- Executive vice president
- Financial vice president
- Vice treasurer
- Vice secretary
- Vocal / Spokesman
- International liaison
- Alternate / substitute
- Various coordinators / group leads
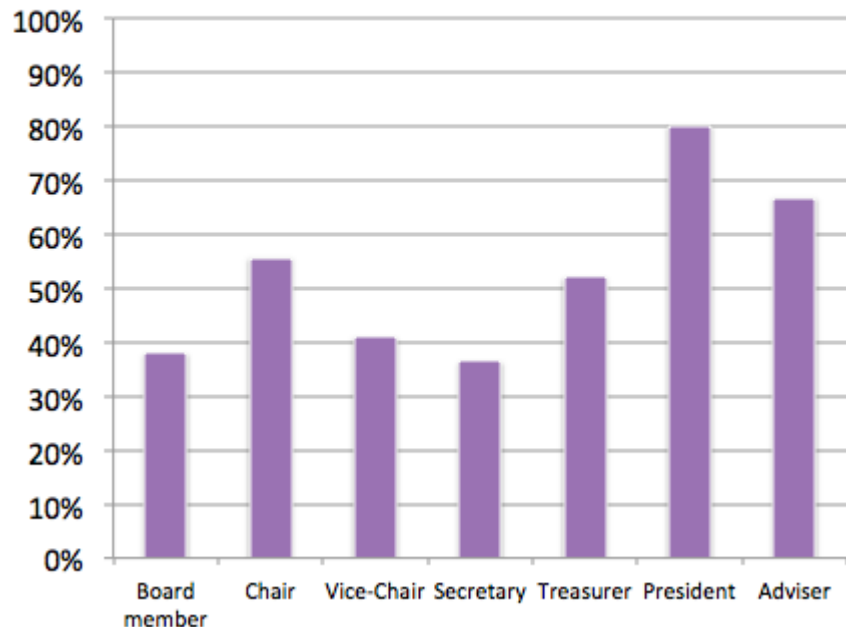- Director
- Executive Director
- Project coordinator
- "None"

Note: Shows % of boards for whom responses were recorded; excludes WMF

Most orgs do not clearly define positions and do not regularly update or refer to descriptions
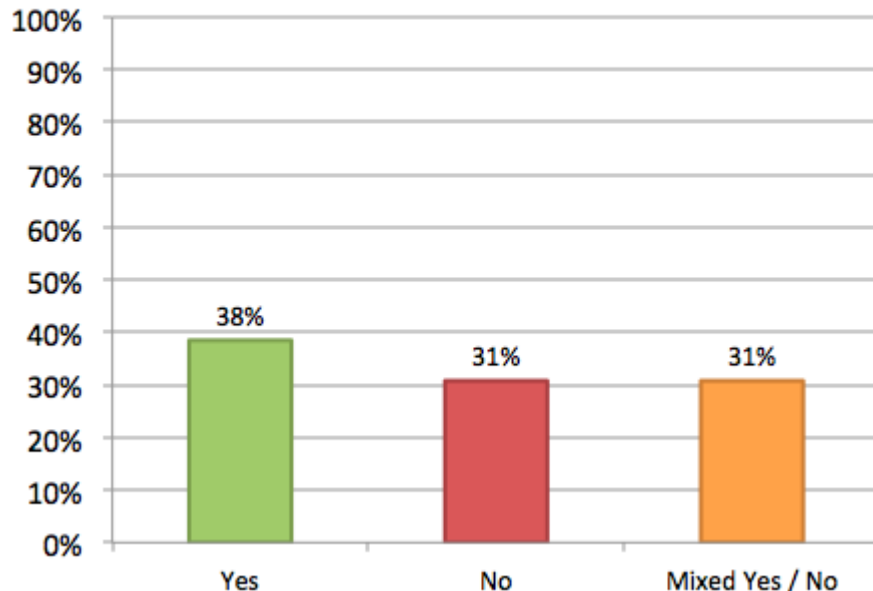
<40% of orgs have a clear description for a "board member".

Boards are mixed in terms of whether or not they refer to and update position descriptions.

% of boards with position which agree position is clearly defined

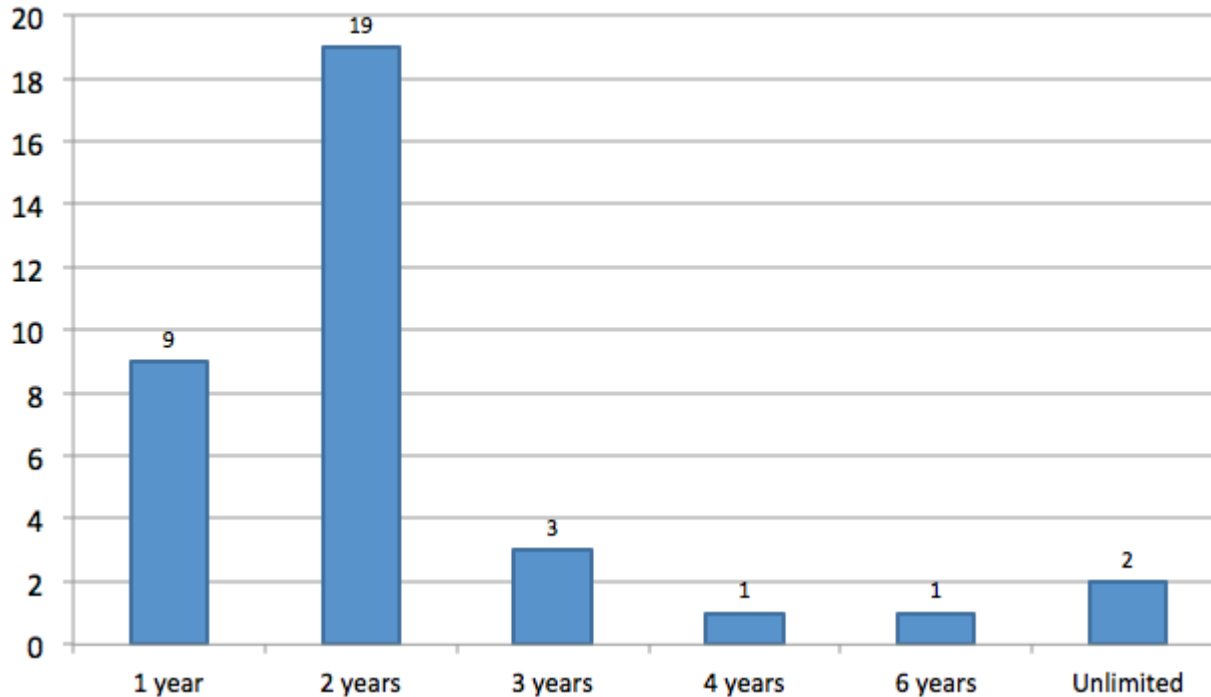% of boards which regularly (biannually/ annualy) update and refer to positions

Note: Shows % of boards for whom responses were recorded; excludes WMF

Orgs have 1- or 2- year board terms on average

Note: Answers were inconsistent across organizations, which is why N > 33

organizations with board terms by length

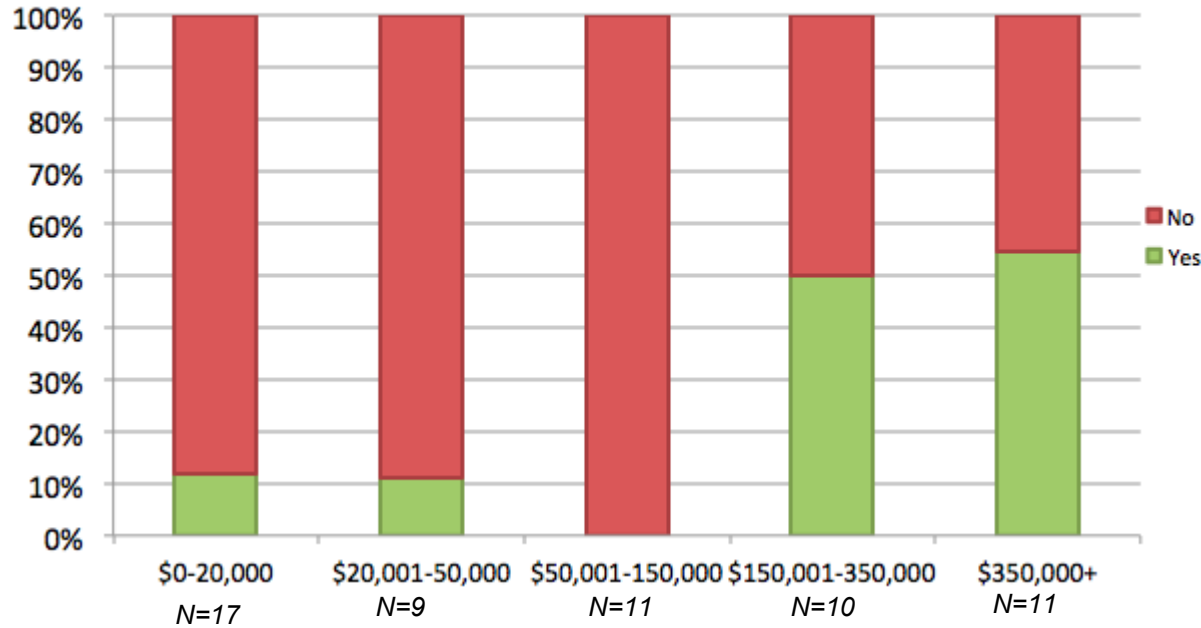- 50% of the largest budget organizations (>$150,000) have boards with 1-year term lengths

Most boards do not have training; the few that do are larger budget organizations
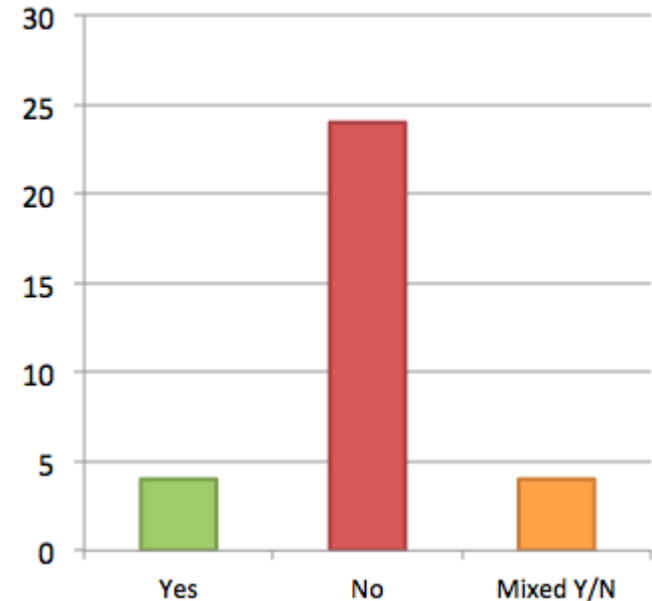
Orgs with larger budgets are more likely to have some sort of board training.	At least 75% of organization boards have no training.

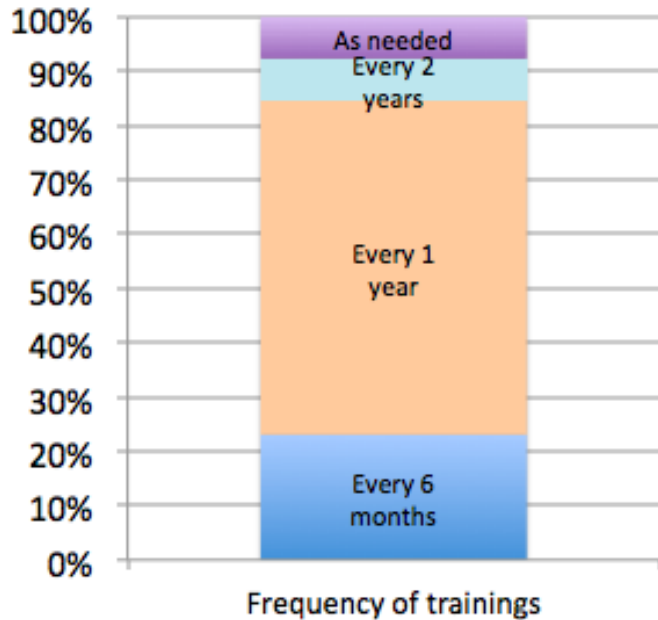% of total respondents who serve on boards with board training

orgs with board training

61% of organizations with training host it on an annual basis, covering a wide range of topics

% of repondents by frequency of training

Frequency of trainings

Q: Tell us more! What do you cover in your board training?

Interpersonal skills and communication

Induction into duties of a Trustee. Editing training and projects/community induction for non-Wikimedians. Members are given a third-sector "how to be a good trustee" guide.

introduction to wikipedia projects & community, intro to wikimedia organisation and issues, soft skills with focus on communication behavior

1-2 members participate at the international board trainings. Internal board meetings lasting 1-2 days cover discussions about strategy, commitment, responsibility and good governance.

We go over legal and ethical obligations, how to work smoothly with the ED and staff, how to develop individually while on the board; and review the board's current strengths and gaps given the organization's needs.

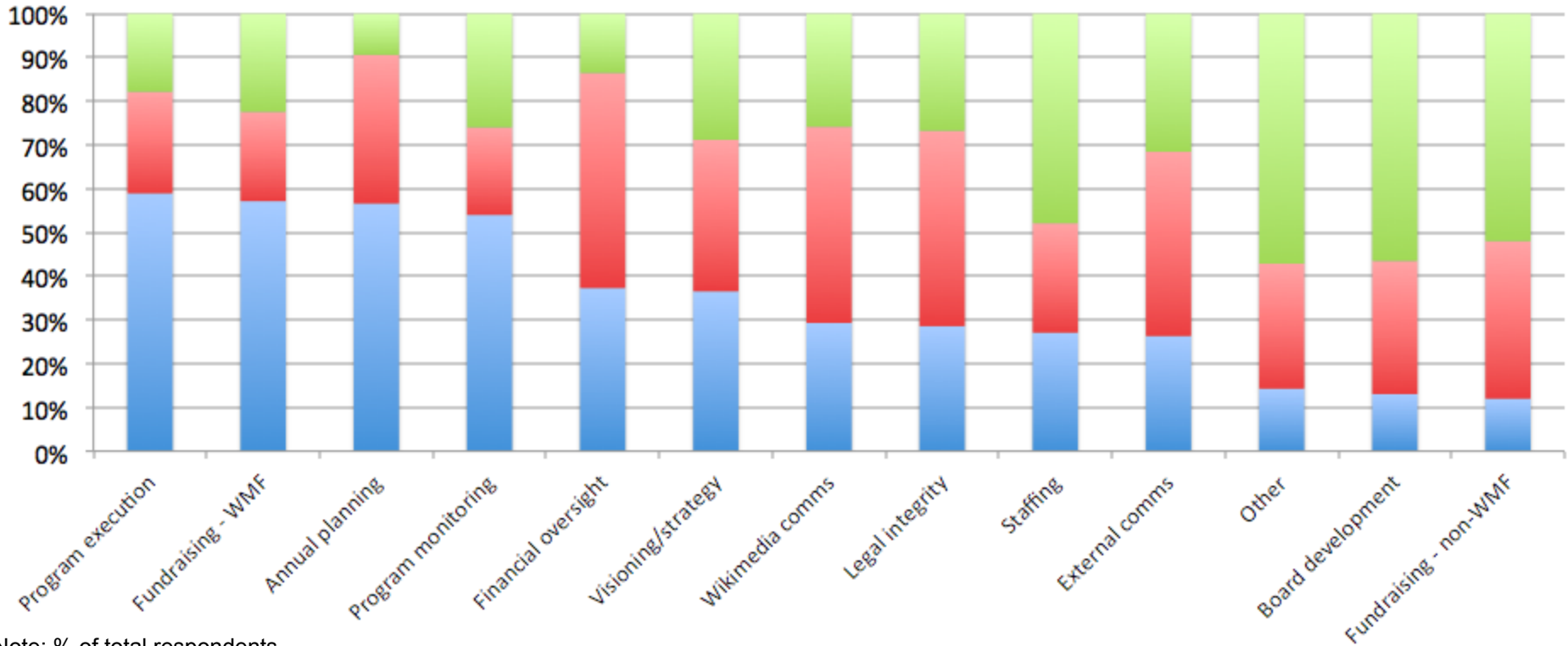*The legal system wrt our organisation, it's rule wrt community.*

All aspects of what being a charity trustee entails in the UK including legal responsibilities, governance etc

In general, boards have 12 responsibilities:

- **Visioning and Strategy**: determine mission and purpose; create and review a statement of mission and purpose that articulates the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served
- **Staffing**: select and support the executive director and/or other first staff
- **Annual planning**: actively participate in an overall planning process and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan
- **Program monitoring**: monitor and strengthen programs; determine which programs are consistent with the organization's mission and monitor their effectiveness
- **Program execution**: running programs (setting up outreach events, technical development, executing events, etc.)
- **Wikimedia communication**: speaking to the Wikimedia community, whether to gain support for the organization, to ensure the organization continues to fit within WIkimedia movement values, or bring the voice of the community to the board
- **Financial oversight**: assistance in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place
- **Board development:** articulate prerequisites for candidates, orient new members, and periodically and comprehensively evaluate their own performance
- **Legal integrity:** adherence to legal standards and ethical norms
- **External publicity and communications**: enhance the organization's public standing; articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public, and garner support from the community
- **Fundraising from sources outside of Wikimedia movement**: secure adequate resources from outside the Wikimedia movement
- **Fundraising from Wikimedia movement sources (grants)**: secure adequate resources from WMF's Annual Plan Grants or Project & Event Grants programs
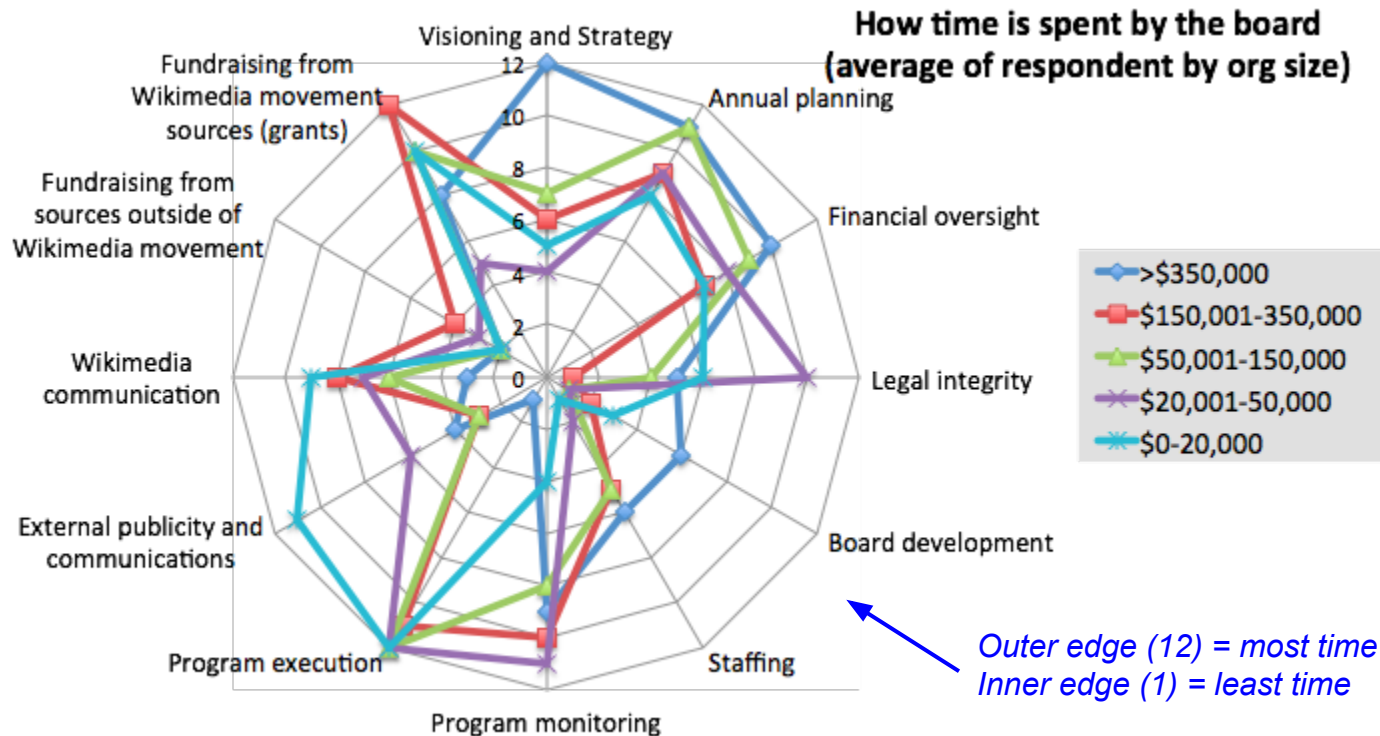
Of these, orgs spend the majority of time on program execution, planning, and fundraising...

Note: % of total respondents

...importantly, boards spend time quite differently based on org budget size (1 of 2)

How time is spent by the board (average of respondent by org size)

Chart axes: Visioning and Strategy, Annual planning, Financial oversight, Legal integrity, Board development, Staffing, Program monitoring, Program execution, External publicity and communications, Wikimedia communication, Fundraising from sources outside of Wikimedia movement, Fundraising from Wikimedia movement sources (grants)

Legend:
- >$350,000
- $150,001-350,000
- $50,001-150,000
- $20,001-50,000
- $0-20,000

Outer edge (12) = most time
Inner edge (1) = least time

Note: % of total respondents

Key Points

- Boards of the largest budget orgs spend time on visioning, planning, and oversight.

- Boards of the smallest budget orgs spend time on program execution, communications, and fundraising.

- All boards spend a lot of time on fundraising from WMF.

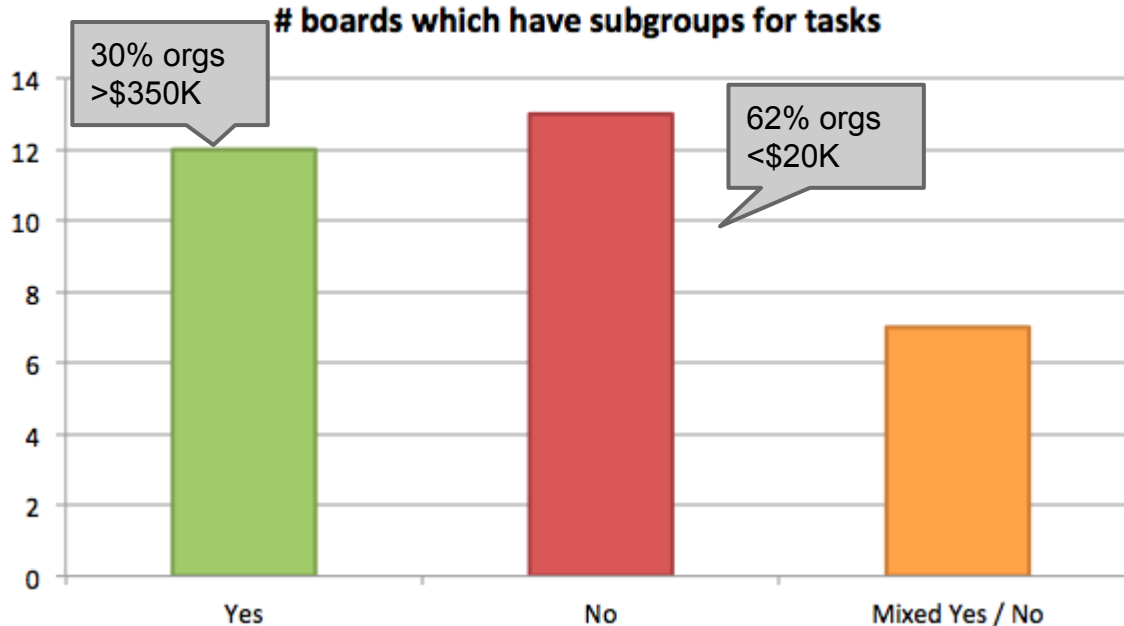- All but the smallest boards spend a lot of time on monitoring programs.

...importantly, boards spend time quite differently based on org budget size (2 of 2)

	Vision and Strategy	Annual planning	Financial over-sight	Legal integrity	Board develop-ment	Staffing	Program monitoring	Program execution	External publicity and coms	WM coms	Fundraising - non-WMF	Fundraising - WMF
$0-20,000	8	5	6	7	10	12	9	1	2	4	11	3
$20,001-50,000	9	4	5	3	12	11	2	1	7	6	10	8
$50,001-150,000	6	2	4	9	12	8	5	1	10	7	11	3
$150,001-350,000	7	4	6	12	11	8	3	2	10	5	9	1
$350,000+	1	2	3	8	6	6	4	12	9	10	11	5

Note: Shows rank based on % of total respondents by organizational budget size

Some boards use subgroups to split tasks, such as committees, and some do not

Q: Does your board have subgroups, departments or other / organisational ways to split tasks?

boards which have subgroups for tasks

30% orgs >$350K

62% orgs <$20K

Yes — No — Mixed Yes / No

Most common subgroups

- Audit/Financial Committee (most common)

- Program-based Committees
  - By strategic area: e.g., content, tech, community
  - By program type: e.g., GLAM, Outreach
  - Membership

- Employee/Staff Committees

- Governance Committees

- Strategy
  - Comprehensive strategy
  - 1-year strategic initiatives

Boards of all sizes monitor programs primarily through setting measures of success

*"**Several board members lead a working group,** comprising both members & staff, in charge of evaluation. The working group has devised a common framework for evaluating programs, and advise the staff on the objectives and metrics the come up with. They liaise to the rest of the board and periodically (each quarter) report on progress & results."*

Respondent of a >$350,000 org

*"**Each project undertaken by our chapter is assigned one board member**. At completion, the project lead will prepare a project report for submission to the funding organisation. The report must be reviewed by another board member before it is submitted."*

Respondent of a $20,001-50,000 org

*"We discuss how various projects are successful and **put stress on those successful**. We actively search people who are effective and active program leaders to work on executing interesting projects. We collect data for the annual report."*

Respondent of a $0-20,000 org

*"The function of the board is based to delegate the bulk of activities to chapter members, who then will be responsible for the projects and programs. **We don't have a formal measurement system, but we try to do follow-up of proyects and programs** with the networks established by the chapter (email, social networks, etc.)"*

Respondent of a $0-20,000 org

Evaluation is increasingly taken on by boards, because of funding requirements

"Mostly driven by internal discussion and external reporting. **Only formalised to the extent required for reporting.** *Have been trained on the use of the program evaluation tools, but they're not heavily being used by our board."*

- Respondent of $0-20,000 org

"To be honest, in our organisation we didn't do this regularly. Due to grants reviews and thanks to learn this in Wikimedia movement conferences we started to try it. We compare similar activities, we see how many press mentions the activity had, how many people was involved (as volunteer and as participant), how much did it cost, etc."
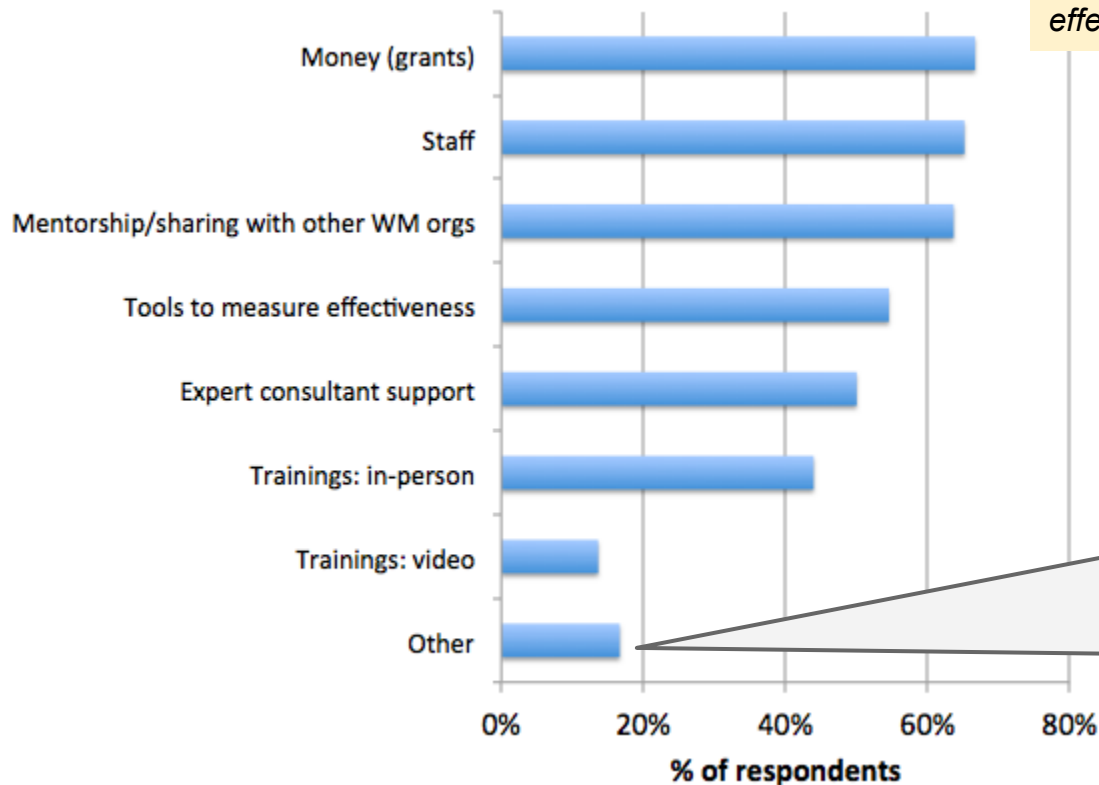
Respondent of $0-20,000 org

"Board members create new projects; take a part to create annual plan; but program review is not a key focus of the Board memebers right now. We are dealing with other problems in the current year."

Respondent of $0-20,000 org

Respondents identified money as the primary gap to effectiveness

Q: What additional resources, if any, do you feel your organization needs in order to more effectively reach its goals? Select all that apply.
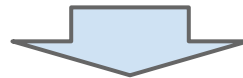

- More time!
- Cultural change
- Board diversity
- More members
- Participation in international events / ability to travel
- Engagement with other similar non-Wikimedia organizations

Smaller budget orgs have different priorities from larger budget orgs

Q: What additional resources, if any, do you feel your organization needs in order to more effectively reach its goals? Select all that apply.
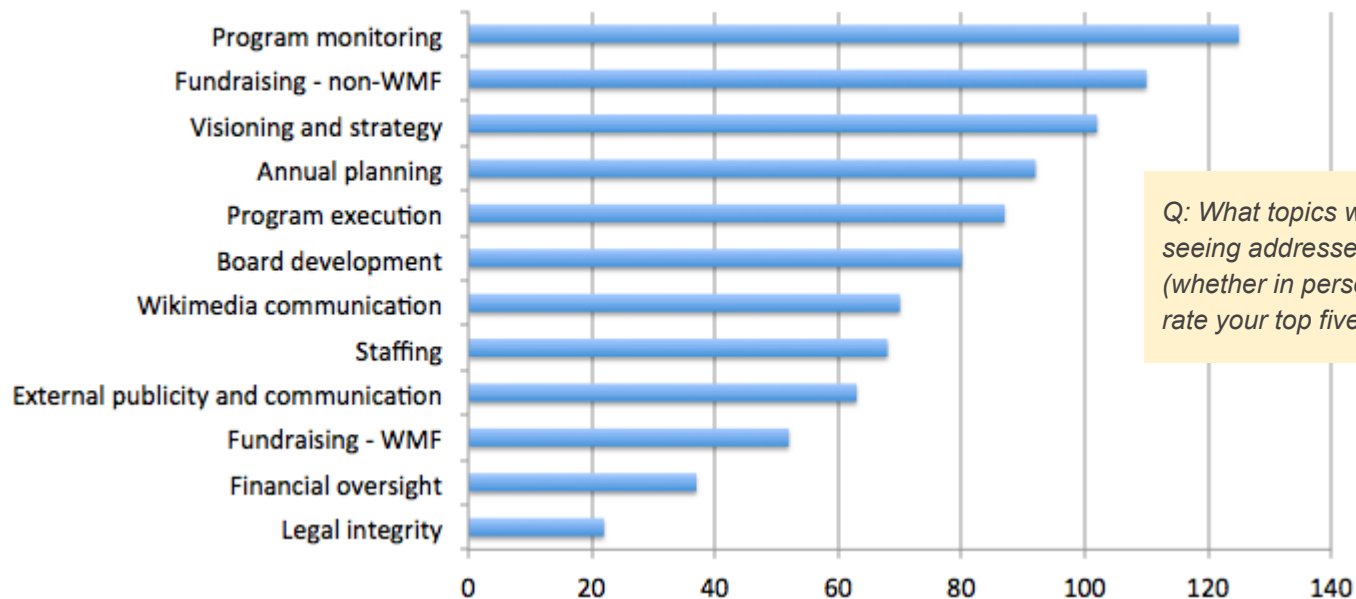
	Money (grants)	Staff	Mentorship/ Learning from WM orgs	Tools to measure effectiveness	Expert consultant support	In-person trainings	Video trainings
$0-20,000	89%	61%	67%	50%	56%	67%	17%
$20,001-50,000	50%	56%	28%	11%	28%	11%	6%
$50,001-150,000	33%	44%	39%	44%	28%	28%	6%
$150,001-350,000	44%	33%	50%	39%	22%	22%	11%
$350,000+	22%	39%	39%	44%	39%	22%	6%

Orgs across budget sizes are interested in learning more from one another

Boards are most interested in learning about program monitoring and non-WMF fundraising

Top rated areas of interest for further learning

Q: What topics would you be most interested in seeing addressed in ongoing training modules (whether in person or online sessions)? Please rate your top five (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) in order of interest.

Note: Assigns 5 points for every "1" rating, 4 points for every "2" rating, etc.