

Success and impact of volunteer support in the Wikimedia movement

Results of
Volunteer Supporters Meeting
November 2017 | Berlin

Reader



Image: Cornelius Kibelka (WMDE)

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The Volunteer Supporters Meeting is documented here:

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Volunteer_Supporters_Network/Berlin_Meeting_2017

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What is successful volunteer support?

Statements developed by the participants of our meeting:

- **Successful volunteer support gives rise to a happy Wikimedia community.** It makes volunteers feel that their work is valuable and appreciated. It fuels their motivation and spiritedness.
- **Successful volunteer support lays the basis for fruitful relations between Wikimedia affiliates and the wider Wikimedia community.** It facilitates mutual understanding and the alignment of goals. It makes Wikimedia affiliates more approachable and trustworthy.
- **Successful volunteer support helps Wikimedia volunteers to use and to improve their skills.** It enables them to focus on their quality driven objectives and to express their needs and wishes.
- **Successful volunteer support leads to a higher number of volunteers contributing to Wikimedia projects.** It sets examples of friendly, supportive and empowering working environments.
- **Successful volunteer support implicates more free content on Wikimedia projects.** It adds to making the providing of free content a pleasant experience.
- **Successful volunteer support values the involvement of the general public and external partners.** It contributes to the high reputation and widespread usage of Wikimedia projects.

In order to reflect on our work as volunteer supporters, it can be helpful to ask oneself the following questions:

- What is our contribution as Volunteer Supporters in the movement?
- What are we trying to change for the better?
- What would happen if we didn't exist?
- What is the difference we make?

To plan and evaluate the results and successes of our work, logic models demonstrating the relations between outputs, outcomes and impact can be very useful. All logic models presented in the slides during the meeting can be found here (together with some more background information):

- https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Logic_Models_-_A_tool_for_planning_and_evaluation.pdf (explains the differences between *outputs*, *outcomes* and *impact*, illustrates the *stairway to impact* and the use of *logic models*)



What do we want to achieve with our work as volunteer supporters?

This question was addressed by group members during the meeting. The answers show that there are 6 main areas that volunteer support in the movement tries to improve:

- community happiness and motivation
- community-chapter relations
- skills, productivity and efficiency of community
- content
- outreach / reach
- community growth



Wikimedia's community-related metrics

Shared Metrics

While the group agreed that the shared metrics are somewhat limited in their informative value when it comes to demonstrating the outcomes or impact of volunteer support activities, it was noted that they are usually fairly easy to evidence and can thus be used to convey a general impression of supported activities and their outputs.

Participants

How many people participate in our activities

examples

- (1) number of users participating in photo contests
- (2) number of visitors at annual WikiConference
- (3) number of unique participants in face-to-face activities of Hebrew Wikipedia

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Israel \(APG\)](#)

official definition

- ✓ people who attend events, programs or activities in person
- ✓ people who attend events, programs or activities virtually
- ✗ people organizing activities
- ✗ social media followers, donors, or others not participating directly

discussion

The group agreed that measuring the number of participants of an event gives a good overview of what chapters / volunteer supporters are doing, but does not say anything about the actual results of an event. It was noted that it is not always a useful metric, as events differ considerably in their nature - there might be lots of participants at a WLM photo exhibition, but many of them might just be “visitors” who do not get involved with the subject matter. On the other hand, rather few participants might attend a hands-on meetup on a certain topic, but might be much more engaged.

While it can be interesting to compare the participants metrics of a certain chapter from year to year, comparisons between chapters are less fruitful due to the different circumstances and contexts.

Depending on the nature of an event, the number of participants can be found out by asking people to sign-up on-wiki, having participants enter their names in lists when attending an event, or counting the number of participants oneself (for small groups). One aspect discussed focused on how to actually count the number of participants at large events (e.g. at a booth during a fair). While the amount of material distributed at such occasions might give an indication of the number of participants engaged, real figures can only be obtained by counting every single person coming to the booth, people engaging in conversations / asking questions etc. (which is of course a rather time-consuming way of obtaining the numbers).

Newly registered

How many newly registered users are involved in our activities

examples

- (1) number of newly registered users making their first contribution on Wikimedia Commons owing to Wiki Loves Earth
- (2) number of newly registered users participating in article writing contests

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#)

official definition

- ✓ participants that create new accounts on a Wikimedia project
- ✓ including users who register up to two weeks before the start of the event
- ✗ only new users still active after their registration

discussion

When discussing the metric of newly registered users, people agreed that the goal of our efforts is not to simply get new editors to register, but of course to increase the number of active editors. Therefore, the success of measures taken can only really be evaluated by tracking how many of the newly registered users actually stay / become active in the projects.

Of course the goal of every editing workshop etc. is to get people to contribute to the projects. However, if all attendees are “forced” to register at such events, this might not be indicative of the success of a workshop. Some attendees might not be able to come up with a username straight away, some might not feel comfortable with registering until they have learned more about Wikipedia, some might just be interested in learning about Wikipedia and not want to contribute straight away.

Nonetheless, finding out how many people become registered users in the course of a Wikimedia-supported event is still good and can give the organizers an idea of whether or not their efforts had the desired effects.

Content pages

How many new / improved Wikimedia content pages do we support

examples

- (1) number of Sami-related items added to Wikidata
- (2) number of pages proofread in Armenian Wikisource
- (3) number of uploaded/released multimedia files on Wikimedia Commons

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Norge \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Armenia \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Serbia \(APG\)](#)

official definition

- content pages created across all Wikimedia projects
- content pages improved across all Wikimedia projects
- non-content pages created or improved across all Wikimedia projects
- freely licensed content outside of official Wikimedia projects

discussion

Most of the group agreed that the content metric is interesting. After all, improving the content in Wikimedia projects is one of the movement’s central concerns. However, it can be very hard to assess whether content creation is directly related to particular projects or the efforts of volunteer supporters. Also, the mere number of created content pages does not tell us anything about the quality or the diversity of the content, and is thus also somewhat limited in its informative value when it comes to the success of our volunteer support activities.

State of the community

Size

the community's size regarding the number of editors (willing to stay)

examples

- (1) number of continuous editors of Hebrew Wikipedia
- (2) number of maintained active editors of Armenian Wikisource
- (3) percentage of users who expect to be contributing to Wikimedia two years from now

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Israel \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Armenia \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Foundation \(Community Engagement Insights\)](#)

Diversity

diversity in the community (gender etc.), perhaps conditions for diversity

examples

- (1) percentage of female participants at outreach activities
- (2) number of unique participants and/or organizers of activities who belong to underrepresented groups in the Wikimedia movement in Austria (women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, foreigners, people with disabilities [etc.])
- (3) percentage of users feeling unsafe contributing to Wikimedia projects online because of their race or ethnicity, level of education, gender, sexual orientation [etc.]

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Foundation \(Community Engagement Insights\)](#)

Working atmosphere

*working atmosphere in the community
(e.g. mutual help, mutual appreciation,*

conflicts)

examples

- (1) number of users supported on the Teahouse (Fikarummet) at Swedish Wikipedia
- (2) number of conflicts on Catalan Wikis
- (3) extent to which Wikimedians agree or disagree that other Wikimedians properly recognize good contributors

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Sverige \(APG\)](#), (2) [Amical Wikimedia \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Foundation \(Community Engagement Insights\)](#)

New editor retention

new editor retention over a defined time span, or community growth as a whole

examples

- (1) number of people who registered as editors during an activity and are still active three months after the activity was completed
- (2) number of new editors editing Wikimedia projects at least 5 times every 4 weeks during a time span of 12 weeks after registering
- (3) monthly increase of German-language Wikipedia editors with 10+ edits

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Nederland \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Deutschland \(APG\)](#)

Community roles and engagement

Leadership

how many volunteers take leadership roles online or offline

examples

- (1) number of volunteer organizers of supported activities
- (2) number of editors taking leading positions in Hebrew Wiktionary

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Israel \(APG\)](#)

Skills

new skills, e.g. by trainings for volunteers

examples

- (1) number of people trained during edit-a-thons, trainings, workshops...
- (2) percentage of participants of trainings expressing increased level of skills and confidence



Sources: (1) [Wikimédia France \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#)

Internationality

increased internationality by communities working together or for each other

examples

- (1) number of other chapters' projects and contests where our community members join to translate content
- (2) number of content pages added or improved on other language versions (non-Dutch) of Wikipedia and Wikisource
- (3) number of countries participating in Wiki Loves Earth

Sources: (1) [Amical Wikimedia \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Nederland \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#)

Time spent

time spent by volunteers, especially for organizational activities

examples

- (1) hours community members spend on organizing activities or helping staff organize activities (not included are hours spent adding content)
- (2) hours spent by volunteers and lead volunteers supporting the work of the chapter

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Norge \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia UK \(APG\)](#)

Types of support

Events

how many events for different target groups

examples

- (1) number of events like lectures, workshops, exhibitions, meetups, conferences, photo tours etc.
- (2) number of recurring face-to-face meetings for Wikimedians



(3) number of outreach events

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Serbia \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Sverige \(APG\)](#), (3) [The Centre for Internet and Society \(APG\)](#)

Materials / resources

how many materials / resources created and/or distributed

examples

- (1) number of leaflets/brochures published and distributed
- (2) number of new Wikicamp modules on personal development and learning skills

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Armenia \(APG\)](#)

Public reach

public reach, concerning reached individuals or number of activities

examples

- (1) number of individuals reached with permanent online channels (newsletter and social media)
- (2) number of press mentions of the association or an activity
- (3) combined total of the audiences reached through our activities including number of participants, number of leading volunteers and digital media reach

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimédia France \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia UK \(APG\)](#)

(More) types of content-related output

Content quality

content quality, e.g. of Wikipedia articles and media files, by community decorations or by other quality standards

examples

- (1) number of community decorations (*featured*, *quality*, *valued*) for supported media files
- (2) number of *good* and *featured* Wikipedia articles due to education program
- (3) percentage of new articles created at the higher education program and defined as "quality articles" according to the chapter's article quality indicator



Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Armenia \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Israel \(APG\)](#)

Bytes

bytes added and/or deleted in Wikimedia projects

examples

- (1) number of bytes added to wiki projects
- (2) number of bytes deleted with community approval (low-quality content)
- (3) net sum bytes added and deleted

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Armenia \(APG\)](#), (2) [The Centre for Internet and Society \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Armenia \(APG\)](#)

Usage of media files

usage of media files in Wikimedia projects, especially in main namespace

examples

- (1) number of distinct supported media files used in the main namespace of Wikimedia projects
- (2) percentage of uploaded/released multimedia files used in Wikimedia projects

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Serbia \(APG\)](#)

Community–chapter relations

Membership

association membership among community members (or its potential growth)

examples

- (1) number of association members
- (2) number of passive association members without voting rights
- (3) percentage of highly active Catalan Wikipedia users bearing association membership
- (4) on a scale: the likeliness that members recommend a friend to become a member

Sources: (1) [Amical Wikimedia \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (3) [Amical Wikimedia \(APG\)](#), (4) [Wikimedia CH \(community survey\)](#)

Claiming support

claiming support by whom (by how many individuals) or for what

examples

- (1) number of Wikimedians and Free Knowledge activists supported with expertise, financial or other resources
- (2) number of supported individuals who have never applied before
- (3) from the community's perspective: the most important services provided by the chapter
- (4) on a scale: the likeliness that supported users will apply for support again

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Sverige \(APG\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Ukraine \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Österreich \(community survey\)](#), (4) [Wikimedia Deutschland \(support barometer\)](#)

Satisfaction

satisfaction with the support given, maybe its effect on appreciation/motivation

examples

- (1) on a scale: the supported volunteers' satisfaction with the support in general
- (2) percentage of supported volunteers agreeing that the chapter's activities contribute to motivating them for their online work
- (3) percentage of community members feeling appreciated by the chapter

Sources: (1) [Wikimedia Deutschland \(support barometer\)](#), (2) [Wikimedia Österreich \(APG\)](#), (3) [Wikimedia Österreich \(community survey\)](#)

Assessment of current metrics

In order to find out how important the current metrics are (or would be) for evaluating volunteer support by Wikimedia affiliates, the 12 participants of our meeting answered this question concerning each of the metrics:

- *Measuring your success: How much of your time would you invest in order to find this out?*

These four answers were possible:

- *none*
- *a little*
- *quite a lot*
- *as much as possible*

The numbers in the table are the numbers of participants choosing the respective statement. The darker the blue gets, the more people raised their hands.

<i>Measuring your success: How much of your time would you invest in order to find this out?</i>	none	a little	quite a lot	as much as possible
SHARED METRICS				
How many people participate in our activities	1	5	5	1
How many newly registered users are involved in our activities	0	7	4	1
How many new / improved Wikimedia content pages do we support	0	1	7	4
STATE OF THE COMMUNITY				
the community's size regarding the number of editors (willing to stay)	1	3	7	1
diversity in the community (gender etc.), perhaps conditions for diversity	2	2	5	3
working atmosphere in the community (e.g. mutual help, mutual appreciation, conflicts)	0	2	5	5
new editor retention over a defined time span, or community growth as a whole	0	5	6	1



COMMUNITY ROLES AND ENGAGEMENT				
how many volunteers take leadership roles online or offline	1	2	7	2
new skills , e.g. by trainings for volunteers	0	1	4	7
increased internationality by communities working together or for each other	2	7	2	1
time spent by volunteers, especially for organizational activities	3	4	3	2
TYPES OF SUPPORT				
how many events for different target groups	2	8	2	0
how many materials / resources created and/or distributed	8	4	0	0
public reach , concerning reached individuals or number of activities	0	9	2	1
(MORE) TYPES OF CONTENT-RELATED OUTPUT				
content quality , e.g. of Wikipedia articles and media files, by community decorations or by other quality standards	1	8	3	0
bytes added and/or deleted in Wikimedia projects	7	4	1	0
usage of media files in Wikimedia projects, especially in main namespace	2	4	3	3
COMMUNITY-CHAPTER RELATIONS				
association membership among community members (or its potential growth)	0	8	3	1
claiming support by whom (by how many individuals) or for what	0	5	5	2
satisfaction with the support given, maybe its effect on appreciation/motivation	0	0	4	8

The metrics for *skills*, *satisfaction*, *content pages* and *working atmosphere* got the **highest approval** rates. The **least interesting** were the metrics for *materials / resources*, *bytes* and *events*. For many metrics, the assessment also showed the inconsistency of their value for the participants. Among the metrics which got the **most mixed** responses were *diversity*, *time spent* and *usage of media files*.

Tools

Below is a list of tools that can be used for measuring and evaluation.

Further useful information on methods (including interviews, observation and surveys) and evaluation in general can be found here:

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Learning_and_Evaluation

- <https://petscan.wmflabs.org/> (a multi-purpose tool for measuring the contribution of media files and pages; based e.g. on categories or templates and defined time frames; results can be displayed as lists or as a PagePile which can be used with other tools, e.g. Glamorous)
- <https://tools.wmflabs.org/glamtools/glamorous/> (for measuring the usage of media files and pages using media files; based on categories on Wikimedia Commons or pages or single user names or PagePiles generated with PetScan)
- <https://metrics.wmflabs.org> (for measuring bytes and pages as well as new users and user retention; based on a list of user names and a defined time frame)
- <https://metrics.wmflabs.org/reports/program-global-metrics> (a simplified version of this tool)
- <https://outreachdashboard.wmflabs.org> (used by program leaders, participants and for evaluation alike, e.g. for education activities; for measuring various user contributions; based on a list of user names)
- <https://wikimedia.qualtrics.com> (for designing, conducting and analyzing surveys; access granted by WMF on request)

Wishlist

In order to start thinking about how to increase the outcomes and impact of our work as volunteer supporters, the following questions were discussed in small groups:

- **How can we best measure and show the outcomes and impacts of our work?**
- **Why does measuring and showing impact matter for our work? How will it help? How do we do it at the moment?**
- **What do we need in order to be more impact-oriented?**
- **What is currently missing in terms of tools, knowledge and skills?**

It became clear that there are still many challenges connected to measuring and evaluating the success of our work. How can we collect (more) data while at the same time ensuring user privacy? How can we incorporate more long-term evaluations in our daily work? How can content quality be defined and measured? How can we put more emphasis on evaluating the results of our work, while at the same time still concentrating on our daily tasks?

The discussions resulted in a „to-do list“ or wishlist of tools and skills that are currently missing, factors preventing one from focusing on results beyond the output-level, and particular aspects that participants want to concentrate on more in the future. This list includes technical issues as well as methods and practises for a better exchange of knowledge among Wikimedia volunteer supporters and can now serve the Volunteer Supporters Network as a reference point for future endeavours.

These are the participants' top wishes concerning impact, evaluation and our way forward.

<p>Not urgent but important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey template for all chapters to copy, paste and adjust • exchange information (informally) • external specialists for different kinds of trainings • fixing bugs in the current evaluation tools • better search function for usernames on wikis • how-to: create a psychological profile in order to better understand the community 	<p>Urgent and important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create internal platform for volunteer supporters about past activities (and who knows about these) • new metrics for quality • a (condensed and useful) portal with evaluation tools for volunteer supporters • more time for evaluation and support
<p>not urgent and not important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowing the geographical location of users 	<p>Urgent but not important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Wikimetrics: make cohorts editable, make it case-sensitive

Additional ideas that made it onto our wishlists:

- measuring impact / having metrics or methods for showing impact
- doing surveys (quantity)
- measuring the number of active volunteers / editors
- evaluation forms for students who do trainings



- quality interviews with volunteers
- (world café) sessions on conferences regarding problems and solutions
- comparing results over time and seeing the change
- show that we are listening to volunteers and value them
- explaining why we do the things we do
- learn why people want to volunteer and what motivates them
- being community driven
- getting funds for further volunteer support
- having inductions for volunteers
- give volunteers recognition for their work
- having community awards
- having personalized prizes (for competitions)
- having continued engagement (stable or growing community)
- having reliable tools for measuring results
- sharing more experiences and skills (e.g. how to make good surveys)
- having continued international volunteer supporters cooperation (like this VSN meeting)
- having a better and easier to find documentation about metrics and tools
- tracking edits in contests and grant-supported projects

