WMF Trustee Appointment

Introduction

The Wikimedia Foundation is the non-profit organization that operates Wikipedia and other free knowledge digital projects. Together these sites are the fifth most visited web property in the world.

The Wikimedia Foundation supports and guides a global movement with a clear and audacious ambition:

A world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge.

To deliver this vision, the Wikimedia Foundation needs to continue evolving rapidly and wisely. The pioneering context of Wikimedia's role on the web means that we face countless challenges and continuous evolution. We also face immense opportunity to shape the future of information production, dissemination, and consumption trends globally.

The Wikimedia Foundation is now seeking new Board Members to contribute their wisdom and experience to governing the organisation toward further realisation of this better world.

Context

The complexity of Wikimedia's work and world of influence is far reaching. The process for becoming a Board Member of Wikimedia would involve being briefed on the various dynamics of this work. Here is some context for this:

- Global growth - Wikimedia projects are now in over 290 languages and have over 450 million site visits each month. Yet, we believe we are just scratching the surface of serving the world's readership with the information they desire.

- Innovation - knowledge is rapidly changing and expanding and human needs for knowledge are changing making it a fundamental tool to propel social change. We have to adapt to changes in technology, user interfaces and reader/contributor demographics faster than ever before so the world can benefit from a large, open repository of knowledge.

- Execution - we are some 200 employees supporting one of the most complex internet sites. We must make very careful decisions and create leverage wherever possible

- Developing Audience Diversity - we need particular focus on engaging the emerging generation of new web-users: both in engaging youth and increasing engagement with the new global users coming online.

- Diversifying Contributor Culture - the success of Wikimedia projects is due to the volunteer efforts of our global volunteer editorial community members. Engaging more people, particularly of underrepresented demographics is key to removing systemic bias in knowledge systems and society as a whole. Guarding the mission and the culture is key as well.

These huge strategic issues demand that Wikimedia urgently adds Board members who are world-class in their leadership of tech-based growth, innovation, and audience engagement.

Though in the coming years we will seek to add Trustees with other specialties, in this current round of recruitment we are emphasising the need to bolster the Board's strategic capacity around supporting WMF execution capabilities in financial governance oversight, strategic talent development and organizational and community cultures (see desired areas of expertise below) . We are therefore seeking a proven executive leader or a second line executive (C-level or Vice President) of a complex and innovative organization that has sustained growth and global workforce engagement, and who shares compatible values to Wikimedia's.

Desired areas of expertise:

Seat 1: Governance focus: Finance, auditing, operations, business models.

Seat 2: Diversity focus: Human dynamics & social behavior at scale, online cultures & culture diversity, emerging economics, emerging & global media.

Trustee Responsibilities

The Wikimedia Foundation has an ambitious vision and delivering this vision at scale in a rapidly evolving technology and global socioeconomic context is task that requires Board Members of conviction, commitment and creativity. The Board is committed to diversity and gender balance, and includes members with a wide variety of backgrounds and nationalities. Candidates will be global citizens, wanting to serve a global mission.

Responsibilities of Wikimedia's Board of Trustees include:
- Oversee the mission, goals, long-term plans and high level policies of Wikimedia and its projects.
- Supporting the Executive Director, who oversees its day-to-day operations.
- Ensuring the sustainability of the organization by stewarding financial resources and defining independent revenue sources.
- Evangelizing the mission, direction and the activities of Wikimedia.
- Providing support and oversight with regard to accounting, budgeting, and programs.
- Maintaining legal and ethical integrity.
- Recruiting and orienting new trustees.

Characteristics of effective trustees:
- Mission-driven: a passion for, belief in and commitment to the societal benefits of freely-available knowledge as articulated in Wikimedia's vision and mission; core belief in freedom of expression and anti-censorship; interest in global movements, consensus-building, and radical transparency;
- Strategic: able to see around the corner of global developments and steward our vision by projecting our strategy into an evolving context;
- Thoughtful: sensitive to the complexity of community-driven projects; patience with consensus processes;
- High integrity: Independent and open-minded, has the ability to make unpopular decisions
- Excellent communications: able to work through complexity to clarity, to make pioneering stratagems accessible and actionable;
- Respectful and Community-oriented: sincerely values diversity, input and collaboration from various constituencies; celebrates the volunteerism of the Wikimedia community, members and chapters; wanting to take others with them on the journey;
- Flexibility and a sense of humor: able to thrive in a passionate, relational and creative context.

Three, renewable terms are served. Board Meetings take place over two days as the Board convenes three times a year and five scheduled online meetings. Two of these Board Meetings are in San Francisco and one will be in changing locations around the globe. Board members also typically participate in at least one Board committee and make themselves available to support the CEO and her team with strategic counsel as required. Outside of the Board Meetings, need for engagement ebbs and flows, requiring approximately 8-12 hours for discussion per month.

Ahead of the late November Board Meeting, Wikimedia is welcoming statements of interest in joining the Board (ideally a CV/extended bio and an accompanying statement of why you are interested in supporting the work of Wikimedia). These can be sent to boryana@wikimedia.org and discussions will then be arranged to support a two-way discernment process. The goal is to make the appointment of two new Board Members before the end of 2015.

Appendix: Guiding Principles of Wikimedia

Freedom and open source

The Wikimedia Foundation is deeply rooted in the values of the free culture and free software movements. With the exception of "fair use" material, all information in Wikimedia projects can be freely shared, freely distributed, freely modified and freely used for any purpose, commercial or non-commercial, in perpetuity.

All software code written by the Wikimedia Foundation is licensed under an applicable free software license. We realize our obligations not just to share code, but to cultivate a healthy community of contributors around the source code, and to work with upstream projects and contribute back improvements to their code.

All material in our projects is available in free formats that do not require the user to install proprietary software.

Consistent with the above principles, we support the right of third parties to make and maintain licensing-compliant copies and forks of Wikimedia content and Wikimedia-developed code, regardless of motivation or purpose. While we are generally not able to individually assist such efforts, we enable them by making available copies of Wikimedia content in bulk, and avoiding critical dependencies on proprietary code or services for maintaining a largely functionally equivalent fork.

As an organization, we strive to use open source tools over proprietary ones whenever possible.

Serving every human being

The Wikimedia Foundation aims to make material in the Wikimedia projects broadly accessible to all. Ensuring continued reliability, availability and responsiveness of all Wikimedia sites and services is our first priority. In prioritizing new products and features, our goal is to impact the largest-possible number of readers and contributors, and to eliminate barriers that could preclude people from accessing or contributing to our projects, such as poor usability and accessibility, lack of language support, and limited access to technology. We endeavour to create the structural support and the necessary preconditions for bottom-up innovation by others. We do not form agreements in which one organization is given access to material or functionality that others are denied. Where possible, we aim to preserve and support frictionless use of the material in the projects, so that people can share it widely and easily.

Transparency

The Wikimedia Foundation values transparency. In general, our policies and practices are publicly available on our site unless there's a particular reason they shouldn't be. Our financial statements, annual plans, Form 990 and other performance/accountability documents are published on our site, often accompanied by explanatory material. As a matter of general practice, unless there's a particular reason not to, we aim to publish internal organizational policies and procedures, including employee guidelines, financial policies, etc. Detailed site performance information is publicly available, and each month we publicly report on our activities. Most information is available to the public, except where publishing it would infringe on the privacy of other organizations or individuals. In general, where possible, we aim to do much of our work in public, rather than in private, typically on public wikis.

Accountability

The Wikimedia Foundation wants to be accountable to the people who create the Wikimedia projects, to donors, and to readers. Our primary stakeholders are i) Wikimedia editors and other contributors, who have created the overwhelming majority of the value in the projects and who are responsible for the goodwill that the projects and the Wikimedia Foundation enjoy, ii) Wikimedia Foundation donors, who give funding that supports the projects' technical and other needs, and iii) the readers of the Wikimedia projects.

We aim to be careful with donors' money. We pay salaries that are fair but not lavish, and provide reasonable benefits (e.g., health and dental insurance) that are the same for all employees regardless of their title or position. We aim to incur only reasonable travel costs, and to keep work-related entertainment costs moderate.

Stewardship
The Wikimedia Foundation has been entrusted with stewardship of key assets of the Wikimedia movement, such as the Wikimedia brand identity, and we raise large amounts of money for the Wikimedia mission. When we give out movement resources such as grants and trademark permissions, when we allocate internal time and resources, and when we give out money to other movement players, we do so in consideration of the interests of the mission and the entire global community. We aim to enable movement entities to have the freedom and flexibility they need to pursue the mission as they see fit, and yet we also acknowledge that the Wikimedia Foundation plays a special role in safeguarding the projects' assets and reputation.

Shared power
The Wikimedia Foundation works in partnership with a global community of volunteers made up of article writers, copy-editors, photographers, administrators, page patrollers, quality assessors, translators, help-desk staffers, developers, bot creators, people who do outreach work and many others. These are the people who build the projects, and they are the Wikimedia Foundation's partners in developing the platform. This community selects Board members who oversee the Wikimedia Foundation's work. And within the framework of our shared principles and values, the participants on each Project develop their own policies and structures.

The Wikimedia Foundation shares decision-making with the global community, for instance by creating roles for community members to influence key funding decisions (e.g., our various grant processes), by inviting input on-wiki for our own plans and practices, and by actively developing and maintaining relationships with community leaders, agnostic to language, culture, or geography.

In addition to our partnerships with individual volunteers, we work in collaboration with a network of chapter organizations and other Wikimedia movement entities, in our shared pursuit of the Wikimedia mission. Beyond the Wikimedia community, we strive to partner with other users of our technology platform whose interests are aligned with ours in enriching and extending it.

Internationalism
The Wikimedia Foundation supports projects that are international in scope, and we aspire to reflect that internationalism in our own work. We make efforts to support the translation of key documents into multiple languages. We aim to recruit staff who speak multiple languages and who have lived or worked outside the country they were born in. We aim to recruit talented people regardless of where they live, and depending on their preferences and the needs of the job, we support them in working remotely or relocating to the United States. When we consider

the community as a whole, we aim to consider all its languages and geographies and to avoid global initiatives that favor only communities speaking the same language.

Free speech

The Wikimedia Foundation believes that everyone in the world has a right to free access to information, and we are proud of the work the Wikimedia community does to compile information and make it available. Except where required by applicable law, we do not remove information from the Wikimedia projects to satisfy private or government interests. We will never facilitate, enable or condone censorship of the Wikimedia projects.

In making decisions, we will not allow censorship of the projects as a means to facilitate other strategic goals: to the contrary, our strategic goal is to preserve and make available the material in the projects in perpetuity, and other initiatives must be consistent with that mission.

Independence

Part of the job of the Wikimedia Foundation is to ensure that the freedom and independence of the projects is never compromised. To that end, and also because it is extremely effective, we have deliberately chosen a revenue strategy in which a large majority of the funding for the Wikimedia Foundation comes from a large number of small donors in multiple countries around the world. This model limits risk, preserves independence by reducing the ability of any one organization or individual to influence our decisions, and aligns our fundraising practices with our mission by encouraging us to pay attention to the projects' readers.

Because the Wikimedia Foundation does not want to compromise the editorial integrity and independence of the projects, nor risk a perception that we have been compromised, we would be extremely reluctant to put advertising on the projects, or anything that might be perceived as advertising.

For similar reasons, our Board of Trustees selection process is designed to attract a variety of voices and skillsets, rather than primarily acknowledging donors or celebrities. Other governance structures and processes, such as Board committees, generally function according to this same principle.