

## ***Introduction***

This document summarizes the findings from research conducted to support decision making during the redesign of the Wikimedia Foundation website.

Since 2003, the Wikimedia Foundation has supported the growth of free knowledge around the world. Our projects reach more than 1 billion devices a month, and every year, more than 4 million people donate to support the Wikimedia Foundation.

Foundation staff are leaders in technology, research, law, and more. Foundation projects are global reference points for international collaboration, knowledge sharing, and community-building. Yet relatively few people are aware of the Wikimedia Foundation, or the Wikimedia vision. This is surprising given the world-wide reach of Wikipedia. Even those that are aware of the Foundation have no idea of the scale and impact of the work of the Foundation beyond supporting Wikipedia.

*“When I think about Wikimedia, I think about the infrastructure that it takes to run a site like Wikipedia—servers, getting the code running, network connectivity, that sort of thing.”*  
—major donor

In short, the Wikimedia Foundation is a global organization in need of a strong public-facing communications hub.

## ***Objectives of our discovery research***

Discovery is a period of inquiry where we take time to deeply understand and uncover shared project goals. This process sets the stage for the design work to come.

- Understand communication goals and audiences of the organization
- Derive a clear set of design priorities
- Provide a strong foundation for the design work

## What we did

We focused our research on the existing organization and community in order to understand how [wikimediafoundation.org](https://wikimediafoundation.org) could best support the work of the Foundation. We also looked at peer organizations to see how they were representing their work. This gave us the perspective to evaluate the current website content, as one of many means and modes of sharing information with the community, movement, and the world.

- Talked to over 40 members of Wikimedia Foundation leadership, staff, contractors, and community members
- Interviewed representative donors
- Interviewed representatives from a philanthropic organization
- Conducted a comparative review of organizations doing similar work
- Assessed existing content on Foundation wiki and Meta-Wiki

We attempted to recruit a sample of community members through a call for participation that we shared through Meta-Wiki, various mailing lists, and social media, including the Social Media hub. We received very few responses, especially relative to similar research recruiting we've done in many other populations. This itself is a finding. The at-large community did have an opportunity to provide input, but did not. Whether this was due to the format of the request (which required identifying information) or because of a lack of interest, or other reason, is unclear.

By introduction through Foundation staff, we were able to speak with 6 highly-involved community members from geographically diverse areas. We also spoke to several staff members who came in from the community. We are confident that we heard sufficiently representative viewpoints and attained a basic understanding of the concerns.

## ***Research Findings***

### Why does the Wikimedia Foundation need a website?

External audiences ask the same basic questions about what the Wikimedia Foundation is and its relationship to Wikipedia. Lack of awareness of the Foundation and its relationship to Wikipedia creates unnecessary work for Foundation staff and members of the Wikipedia communities.

*“At first, I was pretty lost in the jungle of what is MediaWiki, what is Wikimedia, what is Wikipedia—things that should be distinguished have names that are indistinguishable.”*

*—Donor & new Mediawiki user*

In the absence of a clear starting point for externally facing information about the Foundation, communication tends to be reactionary and inefficient. Foundation staff must not only explain the goals and purpose of a project they’re working on at hand, but must also position the entire Foundation and clarify its role before beginning to form partnerships with other organizations. This adds a tremendous amount of additional work.

Similarly, without a cohesive identity for the Wikimedia Foundation, any reports or documentation created for external audiences carry this same additional communication burden. Instead of just explaining the work relevant to a specific report, they often must position the identity of the Foundation as a whole first. This adds time and therefore cost to these projects unnecessarily.

*“We don’t have any site that’s accessible to just the normal human being trying to learn about the Wikimedia Foundation.”—Foundation leadership*

We want everyone—Foundation staff and communities alike—to have more impact with less work. Our overarching project goal is to create a website that communicates clearly about the role of the Foundation and outcomes of efforts across the entire movement.

That communication is geared towards audiences external to the Foundation and communities.

## Current State — Foundation Wiki

Foundation wiki is currently where external audiences first visit for information about the Foundation. While Foundation Wiki does provide information about the Foundation, its purpose has focused on communication and sharing of materials between the Foundation and Wikimedians.

*“One of the reasons that I think the Foundation is not always front and center in a lot of things is the fact that it doesn’t really have a front door. It doesn’t have the same impetus and gravitas as anything else. It doesn’t really have its own website. You go to the current Foundation front page and it’s like, “Who cares? Am I supposed to be informed and excited about this?” —Community Member*

## People receive information across many channels simultaneously

Transparency is a core value of the Foundation. The Wikimedia Foundation is rigorous about keeping updates and information about ongoing projects available online. In general, information about the work of the Foundation is updated on various Wikis throughout meta and the Foundation wiki.

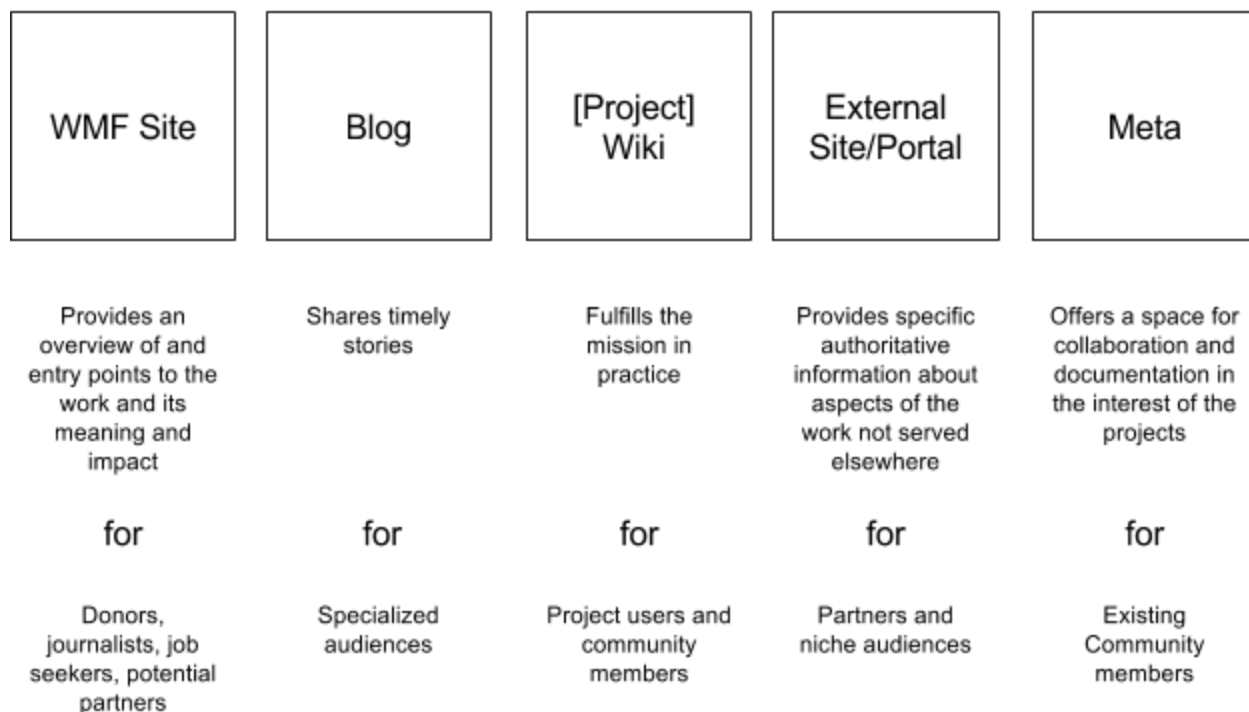
In our research, we observed that the Foundation and Wikimedia communities communicate across many channels. These include (but are not limited to) IRC, Google chat, Facebook, WhatsApp, various wiki talk pages, and email.

Like audiences interior to the Wikimedia movement, external audiences unfamiliar with the Wikimedia Foundation will discover the Foundation site through one of many channels (Wikipedia banner, Facebook, Twitter, email, etc.). How these new audiences will interpret and remember information about the Foundation will have to do with where they find it and how they expect to navigate back to that information.

*"It's all on Meta". All the information you need, it's all somewhere on Meta. The problem is only you can't find it. —Community member*

People are only able to make use of information if they can find it. We recommend making intentional choices about what information lives where to improve discoverability. The model below demonstrates the explicit goals for each online space and the specific audiences each space serves most effectively.

Different spaces for project/program communication serve different needs, and reflect relationships of different types and depth.



An effective communication strategy takes into account the audience for each channel. Similar information may appear in multiple places. What's important is that the right information is getting to the right audience in a form that audience can easily access.

## Current barriers to understanding

Among all the communication channels, wikimediafoundation.org has a unique role. It serves to welcome, inform, and direct members of the public who may be unfamiliar with the organization and the work, and may visit infrequently or just once. For this reason, approaches that work for the projects or on Meta may present barriers.

- Wikimediafoundation.org does not look like a conventional website so external audiences lack expected cues to interpret the page
- Without a clear information hierarchy, new users don't know what information takes priority
- Large navigation menu is difficult to use, particularly on mobile where links are not well spaced out
- The lack of pictures makes it difficult for the website to tell a story with an emotional appeal
- Content is predominantly in English, which sets a misleading expectation about the international nature of the work

## ***Recommendations***

It is a general expectation that a public-facing organization will have a website that communicates its most fundamental messages and basic information to external audiences. To meet audience expectations and be easy to use, the site should follow the right set of principles and conventions, while clearly differentiating the work from all other organizations.

## The new website will function as a front door

The new Foundation website will be a small, but essential part of all online work and communication. Its existence will help to clarify the distribution of communication and collaboration across all websites and wikis.

The new Foundation website will serve as a communication vehicle to reach a wide range of audiences, including those looking for pages on community organizing wikis like Meta-Wiki and MediaWiki.org.

### ***Objectives for WikimediaFoundation.org:***

The specific communication function of this website with regard to the vast amount of community work suggests a particular approach to the content and technology. The site will be designed from the ground up to house a small number of highly curated pages that will each be translated into multiple languages.

- Make the home page a clear starting point for external audiences
- Introduce the Foundation, the mission, and the projects clearly and succinctly
- Convey the impact, scale, and breadth of the work
- Provide a starting point to understand all of the different types of work and access the work product
- Invite and direct participation from potential volunteers, partners, and donors
- Manifest the joy of free knowledge and the generosity of the Movement as a whole
- Promote the global movement, and reflect the multilingual essence of the movement
- Alleviate a significant portion of the external communication burden from Foundation staff

We'll be implementing the design system with Wordpress. WordPress is a solid open source solution that supports well-designed communication across devices with a more traditional editorial workflow. It is also easy to maintain and benefits from a large developer community. Choosing a tool with a large developer community will make future maintenance of the site more cost effective for the Foundation in the years to come.

Finally, we are mindful of feedback from the community that use of wiki software on non-wiki sites can send misleading and confusing signals around site intention and participation to Wikimedia's volunteer community.

## ***What makes a successful, effective website***

Visitors coming to an organization website behave differently than those coming to an educational site, like Wikipedia. Instead of arriving with a question, they often show up to the site just to browse and gain basic familiarity, without knowing exactly what to look for.

## Designing for audiences with different levels of familiarity

Many successful open-source projects follow a paradigm that communicates to audiences with varying levels of familiarity. From various major linux distributions to smaller scale projects like d3.js; these projects all employ a similar design pattern for helping external audiences find the information that fits their level of familiarity with the projects. In short: The ReadMe is not the only way in.



 Data-Driven Documents[Fork me on Github](#)

**D3.js** is a JavaScript library for manipulating documents based on data. **D3** helps you bring data to life using HTML, SVG, and CSS. D3's emphasis on web standards gives you the full capabilities of modern browsers without tying yourself to a proprietary framework, combining powerful visualization components and a data-driven approach to DOM manipulation.

[See more examples.](#)

Download the latest version (4.12.0) here:

- [d3.zip](#)

To link directly to the latest release, copy this snippet:

```
<script src="https://d3js.org/d3.v4.min.js"></script>
```

The [full source and tests](#) are also available for [download](#) on GitHub. Show your support for D3's ongoing development by [buying official stickers!](#)

### # Introduction

**D3** allows you to bind arbitrary data to a Document Object Model (DOM), and then apply data-driven transformations to the document. For example, you can use D3 to generate an HTML table from an

[Read more tutorials.](#)

*The d3.js website reaches a large set of audiences and even provides a quick introduction with clear pointers to useful resources.*

Expert audiences are familiar with visual indicators like “Fork me on Github” and inline links that quickly navigate to the source code repository. An intentional starting point communicates the main goals of these projects and provides links to documentation and steps for getting started.

README.md

## D3: Data-Driven Documents



D3 (or D3.js) is a JavaScript library for visualizing data using web standards. D3 helps you bring data to life using SVG, Canvas and HTML. D3 combines powerful visualization and interaction techniques with a data-driven approach to DOM manipulation, giving you the full capabilities of modern browsers and the freedom to design the right visual interface for your data.

### Resources

- [API Reference](#)
- [Release Notes](#)
- [Gallery](#)
- [Examples](#)
- [Wiki](#)

### Installing

If you use npm, `npm install d3`. Otherwise, download the [latest release](#). The released bundle supports anonymous AMD, CommonJS, and vanilla environments. You can load directly from [d3js.org](#), [CDNJS](#), or [unpkg](#). For example:

```
<script src="https://d3js.org/d3.v4.js"></script>
```

*The d3.js README is intended for audiences who are already familiar with the project and ready to dive in and contribute. This well-written documentation can easily be accessed from the “Fork me on github” link on the d3.js project website.*

We recommend incorporating these interaction design patterns with the Foundation site. Surface projects that appeal to the widest audiences to engage potential volunteers and demonstrate to potential donors the value of the work.

## *A few best practices*

- Create quality, stable content
- Create clear pathways through the content to relevant content
- Employ well-structured and semantic HTML to surface information for visitors and search engines
- Meet site visitors' needs where they are; piggyback behaviors that already exist instead of guiding new ones

## Visibility over Transparency

The Wikimedia Foundation has a deep commitment to transparency. But if information isn't easy to find, the value of having access to everything is lost to the time it takes to just discover what's relevant.

Making a site browsable relies on creating a stable, relatively static structure that builds users' confidence that the useful information they find will be easy to find again. This is a departure from the wiki medium in general where the structure grows and evolves over time as information is added to the entire body of knowledge.

The Foundation website should clearly lead users to major areas of concern, within which specific messages can evolve. The structure should be flexible enough to accommodate reprioritization and be able to represent new aspects of the work without feeling arbitrary. A user-friendly relationship between content and structure requires an intentional balance of hierarchy and context.

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