

# **Narrowing Focus**

Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees  
meeting  
26 October 2012

Friday: three hours

Saturday: one hour

10 of you can vote today (if you are ready, i.e., don't need or want more discussion), or seven of you can vote Saturday. You can't vote online after the meeting.

(Jimmy, Matt and Patricio are absent Saturday.)

# Agenda

1. Walkthrough (Sue)
2. Discussion (All, including C-levels)

(possibly the remainder is Saturday)

3. Vote (Board)
4. Any follow-up (text writing, etc.) (Board)

# July 2012

"[W]e direct the Executive Director to carry out an assessment of the Foundation's programs and strategic priorities, considering these recent staff and Board discussions. Based on this review, the Executive Director should present options for adjusting the annual plan, potentially reducing or eliminating lower-priority programs and capabilities, by the October Board meeting."

Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees resolution

[http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Resolution:2012-2013\\_Annual\\_Plan](http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Resolution:2012-2013_Annual_Plan)

# July to October 2012

- Lots of discussion among the staff
  - Off-site strategy retreat with C-levels and directors & managers (August)
  - Central theme at the All Staff meeting (September)
  - Mailing list and other discussions
- Recommendation developed on meta
  - Some community members commented on-wiki, plus there was some off-wiki correspondence
  - Purpose of writing in public was transparency
  - Not a consensus recommendation

# Current situation

- Context of complexity and opportunity
- Historically under-invested in engineering with lots of catch-up needed
- Staff is over-stretched and over-mandated
- Important new commitments, most notably the FDC which is a very heavy lift
- Need to reserve capacity to respond to opportunities and crises -- e.g., new travel site, lawsuit, WMUK COI issue
- Desire to shift focus from majority research & experimentation, to majority execution

# Caveat

All the current activities are good. None is wasteful, none shows zero promise.

The question isn't "should this happen."

The question is "is this the **best** way to spend these resources, or is it better for us to redeploy them to higher-priority work."

# 2012-13 Top Priorities

- **Visual Editor** -- creating a first-rate editing experience that doesn't require mark-up
- **Editor engagement** -- finding & productizing ways to engage new editors
- **Mobile** -- enhancing the user experience for people on their phones via Wikipedia Zero + mobile engineering
- **Expanded grant-making capacity** (FDC plus next-iteration WGP). Improving grant-making so it's strategic, impactful, accountable



# What are we

- **Engineering:** We are responsible for the Wikimedia sites (hosting and code), which means we first and foremost should strive to be a world class engineering and product development organization. These are the primary mechanisms we have to influence the size, health and effectiveness of the Wikimedia community.
- **Grantmaking:** We are stewards of the Wikimedia trademarks and the annual site-wide fundraising campaign, have ultimate responsibility for extending affiliation and financial support to individuals and organizations seeking to support Wikimedia above and beyond direct participation on the websites. This includes giving out money, and supporting the creation of excellence in programmatic activities movement-wide.

# **Recommendation: Convert the catalyst projects into grants**

Our commitment to recruiting editors in high-priority geographies continues, but our mechanism for doing it will change.

We will do it through grants.

Why? Significantly less administrative burden for WMF. Less community confusion. Rebalances towards local community and away from WMF headquarters. Fits with focus on strengthening grant-making. Enables scale.

# Recommendation: Wind down the fellowships program

Fellowships have shown some good results. But, they are costly: custom-crafted one-offs.

We can't offer the fellows engineering support, and they do require some organizational resources. Those resources would be better put towards grantmaking and engineering activities.

Why? Frees up organizational resources to be redeployed to grant-making and engineering, including important analytics resources. Supports shift from experimentation to execution.

# Recommendation: Reduce emphasis on events

We will reduce our emphasis on live F2F events.

Fewer hackathons, less direct organizational support for Wikimania.

Events draw a lot of resources (primarily financial and administrative) that would otherwise support core priorities.

We have ideas about how to establish external support for Wikimania, but they will require exploration and time to execute.

# **Recommendation: Support other orgs via grantmaking & crisis support**

The WMF's core purpose is not to support chapters -- chapters are our partners in supporting editors.

We will invest in entity development via grant-making -- this is succeeding in raising the bar WRT compliance and will also succeed WRT programmatic effectiveness. And we will provide crisis support to safeguard the movement's global reputation.

This is not a change from current state. It's intended to establish some clarity about our role, and reduce unfunded mandate.

# Implications for 2012-13 targets, spending and staffing

- Mixed impact on spending, but roughly a wash
- 11 FTE & FTE equivalents will be freed up and redeployed to grant-making & engineering
- Catalyst projects' ability to hit targets may suffer somewhat
- Limited impact on 2012-13, but ability to hit 2012-13 key priority targets will be supported.

# Cost of doing this

- Somewhat lessened ability to support individual community members in executing small helpful projects (fellowships);
- May diminish efforts related to deep community work which nobody else is really doing;
- Less control over the catalyst projects: they will tend to "chart their own path";
- The cost of change itself -- mostly this is HR/F&A-related.

# Benefits of doing this

- Clearer understanding of what we're doing -- what fits in our mandate and what doesn't;
- Better ability to execute;
- Slightly lower risk of staff burnout, especially senior staff;
- Leaves room for other community entities to step up: chapters may fund some fellowships, WCA may be encouraged to step up, communities in catalyst geographies may take more ownership of those projects;
- Supports growing the ecosystem of entities (via grants).



# Foreshadowing what's next

- This isn't a discrete one-off: it's an ongoing process aiming to concentrate our resources;
- We intend to further realign around Engineering & Grantmaking as our two major core competencies, with some additional emphasis on program development;
- We're working towards an internal January restructure which will support that;
- We want to aim to stay flexible and loose;
- Next year's planning will build the FDC &

# Next steps

Any or all of the following

- Questions and comments
- Straw poll?
- Discussion
- Vote
- Any follow-up at the Board level: messaging to the WCA?