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A WIKIBLUEPRINT GUIDE

# The Successful Wikipedian in Residence

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Selection. Execution.  
Mentorship. Impact.



wikibluemprint

ADVANCING OPEN KNOWLEDGE

**104,000,000**

PAGEVIEWS DELIVERED BY A SINGLE  
WIKIPEDIAN IN RESIDENCE IN ONE YEAR

**366**

NEW ARTICLES CREATED  
IN THE SAME ENGAGEMENT

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for the leader, curator, communicator, or program officer who knows Wikipedia matters to their institution and wants to do it well. It distills what WikiBlueprint has learned from helping museums, libraries, scientific bodies, publishers, and corporations select, support, and sustain Wikipedians in Residence.

**“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing.”**

**JIMMY WALES · CO-FOUNDER OF WIKIPEDIA**

## SUMMARY

# The one-page version

## What it is

A Wikipedian in Residence (WIR) is an experienced editor who works inside your institution for six to twelve months, sharing your collection, expertise, and data with Wikipedia and its sister projects. The work follows Wikipedia's policies on neutrality and disclosure, and the community welcomes it openly when the discipline is real.

## What it delivers

A strong WIR can deliver tens of millions of pageviews in a year alongside new articles, structured data on Wikidata, and open-licensed media on Wikimedia Commons. One WIR at our client Annual Reviews produced **366 new articles, 2,910 citations added, and 104 million pageviews** in twelve months. Pageviews are necessary but no longer sufficient: a 2026 WIR also shapes how Google Knowledge Panels, voice assistants, and large language models describe your institution. More than 160 institutions have hosted a WIR, including the Smithsonian, the Met, the British Museum, the National Library of Israel, and the Museum of Modern Art.

## What it costs

A standard twelve-month engagement runs approximately **\$100,000** all-in: a WikiBlueprint guidance retainer of about \$36,000 (\$3,000/mo) plus WIR compensation at thirty hours a week of about \$64,000. Scope flexes: smaller programs run \$40-60K, fellowship-funded variants can be lower. Year two typically drops by a third when WikiBlueprint steps back and the institution carries the work. Internal staff time, tools, and event costs are additional and modest.

## What it requires from you

An internal champion at director level. A point person who can give the WIR two to four hours a week. Workspace, IT access, and Legal sign-off. Realistic expectations about timelines: six to twelve months of active work, then a renewal or transition decision.

## How to start

A thirty-minute scoping call. We listen first, then map what a program could look like at your institution and what it would take to make it succeed. Contact details are on the last page.

## FOREWORD

# A Bridge Built Well, for Both Sides

Wikipedia is the most read reference work in human history. Your institution holds knowledge the world is looking for. Between those two facts sits a craft, and that craft is the work of a Wikipedian in Residence.

A Wikipedian in Residence (WIR) is an experienced editor who collaborates with your organization to share text, images, and data on Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, and Wikidata. The role is not a press function. It is not a marketing channel. It is translation work, moving credible institutional knowledge into a public encyclopedia that receives more than 18 billion views a month in over 300 languages.

Run with discipline, a program multiplies your institution's public footprint at a scale almost no other single hire can match. Selection, execution, mentorship, and impact, handled with care.

This guide is the playbook WikiBlueprint uses with its own clients. Some readers are setting up their first residency; others are running their third or fifth. We have written for both. WikiBlueprint was founded by Jake Orlovitz, who built The Wikipedia Library at the Wikimedia Foundation, and we are sharing this playbook because the world needs more WIRs, and we would rather see the field grow with confidence than shrink from caution.

## What that looks like in practice:

### A RESULT WORTH PAUSING ON

Annual Reviews, the scientific publisher, engaged WikiBlueprint to select, onboard, and support two Wikipedians in Residence. The output from just one of them:

**366** new articles created · **2,200** pages edited · **2,910** citations added · **342,000** words written · **104,000,000** pageviews.

Those are the kinds of numbers that turn an overlooked program into a board-level talking point.

**Where WikiBlueprint comes in.** WikiBlueprint has set up and overseen more Wikipedians in Residence than any other consultancy, with nearly ten programs across the past decade. We organize and advise the process end to end: strategy, recruitment, onboarding, execution, reporting, and reflection. We come on two to three months before the WIR starts, then stay alongside them for six to twelve months as guide, advisor, coach, troubleshooter, and mentor. We help you recruit the right person, integrate them so the work is never done in isolation, and build the habit of visibility that gets the work recognized for the impact it creates.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# Jake Orlowitz

*Founder, WikiBlueprint*

WikiBlueprint was founded by Jake Orlowitz, who built The Wikipedia Library at the Wikimedia Foundation and has been working at the seam between institutions and the encyclopedia for fifteen years.

At the Wikimedia Foundation, Orlowitz founded and ran The Wikipedia Library from 2011 to 2019, growing it to a half-million-dollar program with a six-person team across four continents. He negotiated free access for Wikipedia editors to more than 100,000 scholarly journals through partnerships with 70 leading publishers, created the viral #1Lib1Ref citation campaign that now adds twenty thousand references to Wikipedia each year, and led foundational partnerships with Turnitin, the Internet Archive, and OCLC. Since founding WikiBlueprint, he has selected and supervised Wikipedians in Residence at Annual Reviews, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Milton Public Library, the Smithsonian's Biodiversity Heritage Library, and Equis. He advised Harvard on its Wikipedia engagement, oversaw the Anti-Defamation League's Wikipedia Election Democracy Project, and led the rebrand from Open Access Button to OA.Works.

## AT THE WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION, 2011 TO 2019

Founded and led The Wikipedia Library. Created the #1Lib1Ref and #1Bib1Ref citation campaigns. Founded the Wikipedia Visiting Scholar program, the Wikimedia and Libraries Usergroup, and the Wikimedia Foundation's Knowledge Integrity Program. Built partnerships with Turnitin (copyright detection), Internet Archive (22 million dead-link rescues), and OCLC (ISBN data integration).

## AS A WIKIPEDIAN

35,000+ edits. English Wikipedia Administrator. Two-time Wikimedia Foundation grantee. Founding board member, Wiki Project Med Foundation. Former Individual Engagement Grants Committee member. Creator, The Wikipedia Adventure interactive tutorial.

## SELECTED SPEAKING AND PUBLISHING

Six Wikimania appearances. Talks at Stanford, IFLA, OCLC, ALA, Internet Librarian, Coalition for Networked Information, Digital Library Federation, and OpenCon. Author of the MIT Press *Wikipedia @20* chapter, "How Wikipedia Drove Professors Crazy, Made Me Sane, and Almost Saved the Internet." Primary author of *The Plain and Simple Conflict of Interest Guide* and the Wikipedia and IFLA White Paper.

## RECENT CLIENT AND PROJECT WORK

Selected and supervised two Wikipedians in Residence at Annual Reviews. Advised Harvard University on Wikipedia engagement. Recruited and trained the Wikipedian in Residence at Pérez Art Museum Miami and Milton Public Library. Vice Chair of the Smithsonian working group for the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Featured with Jimmy Wales on NPR's *TED Radio Hour*: "The Public Commons." Built the Citation Watchlist.

PART I

THE ROLE

# What a Wikipedian in Residence Does

A definition of the role, the work it produces, and the qualities that make it work.

**We frame the role before you hire for it.**

Two to three months before a WIR starts, we work with the institution to define what the role is in your context, what it isn't, and what it needs to succeed. Getting the definition right is the first act of strategy, and it is where most residencies are won or lost.

**PART I · THE ROLE**

# A definition that earns its keep

A Wikipedian in Residence is an experienced Wikipedia editor who works inside your institution to build a lasting partnership with the Wikipedia community. The goal is to lift the quality and quantity of information on Wikipedia and its sister projects by putting your institution's resources, expertise, and collections to work.

A Wikipedian in Residence works for you and remains a committed member of the Wikipedia community. They prioritize neutrality and ethical editing. They educate rather than promote. They hold themselves to high standards of disclosure and professionalism. That double allegiance is not a tension to manage. It is the source of the role's credibility, and the reason the work lands.

The role does not replace your peer-reviewed catalogues, scholarly publications, or established research programs. It complements them. A WIR translates institutional scholarship into the encyclopedia where the public actually goes, widening reach for work your researchers and curators have already done.

## The ten core activities

Responsibilities vary, but every strong WIR covers these ten.

- 01 Content creation and improvement**  
Work with staff and subject matter experts to identify topics that need new or improved Wikipedia articles, then create, edit, and maintain them to community standards.
- 02 Training and support**  
Run workshops for staff, volunteers, and the public, teaching them how to contribute to Wikipedia and its sister projects.
- 03 Outreach and engagement**  
Bridge the institution and the Wikipedia community through edit-a-thons, blog posts, on-wiki discussions, and public-facing events.
- 04 Content donation and licensing**  
Help the organization release images, video, and data under open licenses so they become usable on Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, and the wider open knowledge web.
- 05 Wikimedia project integration**  
Advise on how the institution's resources can be put to work across Wikidata, Wikimedia Commons, Wikisource, and other sister projects.

## PART I · THE ROLE

# Activities, continued

- 06 Inter-institutional collaboration**  
Connect with peer institutions and other Wikipedians in Residence to share best practices, reuse templates, and partner on cross-organizational initiatives.
- 07 Promoting open knowledge and open access**  
Advocate inside the institution for open data, open educational resources, and open access policies, with real on-platform results behind the case.
- 08 Building a sustainable community**  
Cultivate a culture of contribution among staff and volunteers so the institution's Wikipedia presence outlasts any single WIR's tenure.
- 09 Developing tailored resources**  
Create style guides, templates, and project pages specific to the institution that streamline editing and raise the quality of every future contribution.
- 10 Evaluating impact**  
Measure outcomes against pageviews, edits, citations, and other meaningful metrics, then recommend what to do more of next.

**“The mission is not just preserving documents, but promoting their use. Through collaboration, we can make these records available for regular use by the public at large.”**

**DOMINIC McDEVITT-PARKS · WIKIPEDIAN IN RESIDENCE, US NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

### **We turn ten activities into a quarterly plan.**

Most institutions hire a WIR and assume the ten activities above will sort themselves out. They won't. We sequence the work into a published quarterly plan, naming which activities lead in which months, where the dependencies are, and what counts as done. That single document is the difference between a residency that compounds and one that diffuses.

## PART I · THE ROLE

# The skills the role demands

A strong Wikipedia in Residence brings technical expertise, interpersonal skill, and deep alignment with Wikipedia's principles. Hiring for one or two and hoping the rest will follow is the most common failure mode in the field.

<p><b>Wikipedia editing experience</b> Fluency with Wikipedia articles, citation styles, formatting, and content policies. Deep familiarity with the core policies on neutrality and verifiability is essential.</p>	<p><b>Subject matter literacy</b> A background in, or genuine readiness to learn, the field your institution operates in. The WIR has to spot real gaps in coverage and develop well-researched articles, not surface-level stubs.</p>
<p><b>Communication and interpersonal skill</b> A Wikipedia in Residence works across two communities at once. Building trust, facilitating knowledge sharing, and addressing concerns in real time is a daily craft.</p>	<p><b>Teaching and training</b> Comfort delivering presentations and workshops, and the ability to explain Wikipedia's mechanics clearly enough that staff retain and use what they learn.</p>
<p><b>Time management and organization</b> Residencies juggle content production, training, reporting, and outreach simultaneously. Strong prioritization is the difference between a busy year and a productive one.</p>	<p><b>Standing in the Wikimedia community</b> Active participation in on-wiki discussions, with the network and credibility that let new edits stick rather than get reverted.</p>

## ALIGNMENT, NOT CONFLICT

A common worry is that a paid WIR is, by definition, in conflict with Wikipedia. The community itself disagrees. Wikipedia's Conflict of Interest guideline explicitly names Wikipedians in Residence as a form of paid editing the community regards as acceptable, provided the WIR collaborates with mission-aligned institutions.

The companion guideline for cultural professionals goes further: *museum curators, librarians, archivists, and similar professionals are encouraged to help improve Wikipedia.* The community wants this work to happen. It just wants it to happen properly.

**PART I · THE ROLE**

# What WIRs do now

The role has matured. A 2014 WIR was largely about creating and improving Wikipedia articles. A 2026 WIR still does that, and does three more things that compound the value many times over.

## Structured data on Wikidata

Wikidata is the structured-data layer that feeds Wikipedia infoboxes, sister projects, and the wider open knowledge graph. For a museum, archive, or library, this is where collection records become machine-readable: artist identifiers linked to authority files, artwork attributes that flow into Knowledge Panels, provenance chains that connect across institutions. A modern WIR treats Wikidata as a first-class deliverable, not a side project. The downstream reuse, in academic search, in cultural heritage aggregators, in third-party apps, often exceeds the reach of the articles themselves.

## Media at scale on Wikimedia Commons

Open-licensed images, audio, and video on Wikimedia Commons get reused across textbooks, news outlets, research papers, and AI training corpora. A residency designed around media coordinates batch uploads, structured metadata on Commons, and attribution flows that bring credit and traffic back to the source collection.

## Wikipedia as substrate for AI

Wikipedia is the most heavily weighted source in nearly every large language model in production. It feeds Google Knowledge Panels, voice assistant answers, and the summaries readers increasingly see before they ever click through to a website. A WIR in 2026 is, among other things, an upstream intervention in how machines describe the institution. Accurate, well-sourced Wikipedia content becomes accurate AI output. Missing or thin content produces missing or thin AI output, with your institution missing from the answer.

For institutions that license images or content for revenue, the tradeoff is real and worth naming. Open-licensed material on Wikimedia Commons becomes AI training data. Most institutions decide the reach benefits of being represented well in AI outputs outweigh the costs, especially for content they already make freely available. The decision belongs to you, not us.

PART II

SELECTION

# Hiring the Right WIR

Eight stages from initial questions to first day on the job, plus the criteria that separate strong candidates from merely available ones.

**We recruit and select alongside you.**

We write the position description, circulate it through the global Wikipedia network we already belong to, screen candidates against the dimensions that matter most, and sit beside you through final interviews. We aren't optimizing for a good hire. We're optimizing for a hire who is productive in week one.

## PART II • SELECTION

## Eight stages of a residency

Part I described the ten activities a WIR performs once in role. Selection is the work that happens before that, and it has its own arc. Every institution and every editor is different, but every successful residency moves through these eight stages in roughly this order.

- 01 Ask questions**  
Learn from residencies at peer organizations. Gather ideas. Build internal interest so the ground is ready when you propose it.
- 02 Decide on your goals**  
What content do you have? What do you want to share? In what form? With whom? Vague goals produce vague residencies. Specific goals produce reportable results.
- 03 Evaluate your capacity**  
Do you have a point person on staff? Is there budget to resource the position? How long do you want the engagement to last? Honest answers now save hard conversations later.
- 04 Recruit and select**  
Write an inviting position description and circulate it widely across the Wikipedia and open knowledge movement. Evaluate candidates, interview the strongest fits, and make an offer.
- 05 Onboard and strategize**  
Welcome and integrate the new hire. Connect them with staff and team meetings. Set a rhythm for regular check-ins. Plan a clear set of activities for the first quarter.
- 06 Execute**  
Write, upload, train, engage, teach, and write more. Look for allies and partners, translations and reuse opportunities. The work compounds month over month.
- 07 Measure and report**  
Track edits, articles changed, articles added, words contributed, and pageviews. Send monthly highlights through the organization, and close with a final wrap-up summary.
- 08 End or extend**  
Many residencies start as six- or twelve-month positions and end up running for years, because the impact is so clear. A Wikipedian in Residence can become one of the most enduring programs an institution runs.

## PART II • SELECTION

## Who has done this, and why it matters to your case

If you are the person inside your institution making the case for a program, you don't have to make it from scratch. More than 160 programs have already been hosted at organizations whose names will do most of the persuading for you. Below is a partial roster, organized by sector. Take the relevant column to your next budget meeting.

<b>MUSEUMS &amp; GALLERIES</b>	Africa Centre · American Folk Art Museum · British Museum · Derby Museum and Art Gallery · Museo Soumaya · Museo Picasso · Museum of Modern Art · Palace of Versailles · Smithsonian Institution · Swedish Performing Arts Agency
<b>LIBRARIES &amp; ARCHIVES</b>	Biblioteca Nacional de Chile · Bodleian Library (Oxford) · British Library · Federal Archives of Switzerland · Houghton Library (Harvard) · Library and Archives Canada · National Library of Norway · National Library of Scotland · National Library of Wales · US National Archives
<b>SCIENCE &amp; MEDICINE</b>	Cancer Research UK · Chemical Heritage Foundation · Cochrane Collaboration · Natural History Museum · NIOSH · The Royal Society · Royal Society of Chemistry
<b>UNIVERSITIES</b>	Columbia University · Concordia University · CUNY · University of Edinburgh · UC Berkeley · University of Toronto
<b>PUBLISHERS, MEDIA &amp; GOVERNMENT</b>	Annual Reviews · Consumer Reports · Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library · TED · The Conversation

**The pattern is the point.** Across museums, archives, libraries, scientific bodies, universities, publishers, and government, the institutions that take public knowledge seriously have already chosen this path. Most of the credibility argument for your own program is already made.

PART III

EXECUTION

# The Partnership Architecture

The questions every Wikipedia content partnership must answer, and the signs that tell you the partnership is working.

**We make sure the WIR is never alone.**

Isolation is what most often derails a residency. We integrate the WIR into your organization, set the meeting and check-in rhythm, and make sure the institution understands what the WIR needs to do the work well. Then we troubleshoot in real time when reality diverges from plan, as it always does.

**PART III · EXECUTION**

# Questions for your partnership

A content partnership is the most ambitious form of collaboration with Wikipedia. The questions below fall under four headers: **Company, Collection, Charge, Campaign**. Each one needs an answer before the partnership begins, not after.

## Company

Who you are, what you stand for, and where the friction is going to come from.

**COI**

How is Conflict of Interest the same or different with this entity?

**COPYRIGHT**

Does copyright limit what the partnership can share?

**COMPATIBILITY**

How well does this company's ethics align with Wikimedia's mission?

**COMMERCIAL**

Are there commercial or marketing intentions that conflict with Wikipedia's rules against promotion?

**CATASTROPHE**

What is the worst-case scenario, on the Conflict of Interest noticeboard or in the press, and how are you prepared for it?

## Collection

What you have to share, and how Wikipedia is currently positioned to receive it.

**CONTENT**

Is there real community appetite for this content?

**CONTRIBUTIONS**

Are there ways to mass-upload contributions efficiently?

**COORDINATION**

How will you coordinate integration into Wikipedia, for instance from Wikimedia Commons?

**COMPETITION**

What other sources already exist for this media or data type?

**CATEGORIZATION**

What is the current state of categorization for the data or media you are contributing?

**PART III · EXECUTION**

# Questions, continued

## Charge

The shape of the engagement: who does the work, who pays for it, and on what terms.

**COACHING**

How much coaching does the organization need, and how much can they handle themselves?

**CONTRACT**

Is a contracted Wikipedian in Residence necessary to handle the technical and social work?

**CODING**

Is there a technical solution that can automate content placement at scale?

**COST**

What is the organization's budget appetite, and is it realistic against the scope?

**COMPENSATION**

What compensation is expected for coaching, and what depth and length of guidance does that provide?

## Campaign

How the work gets framed, paced, communicated, and measured.

**CONCEPT**

How will you brand this initiative in a simple, compelling way that people can repeat?

**CHRONOLOGY**

What is the timeline from planning through execution and into review?

**COMMUNICATIONS**

What blogs, on-wiki outreach, social posts, white papers, and press will support the work?

**COLLABORATION**

Who do you need to work with internally and externally to achieve your goals?

**CRITERIA**

What numerical metrics will demonstrate impact and signal success to stakeholders?

## PART III · EXECUTION

## Signs you're in a great partnership

Building a partnership around a platform as complex as Wikipedia is delicate work. For one to last, certain qualities have to be in place. Below are signs of a healthy Wikipedia partnership. Use them as a diagnostic.

<b>FOUNDATION</b>	Aligned mission and values · Cultural compatibility · Shared goals and objectives · Mutual benefit · Long-term commitment · Respect for Wikipedia's guidelines · Autonomy · Recognition of each other's strengths · Joint appreciation
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Clear communication · Openness to collaboration · Iteration and adaptability · Continual feedback loop · Transparency and trust
<b>CONTENT</b>	Joint content creation · Complementary expertise · Commitment to quality · Shared training initiatives · Collaborative outreach · Mutual promotion
<b>RESILIENCE</b>	Proactive problem-solving · Flexibility in approach · Evaluation and review · Engagement with the Wikipedia community · Shared audience
<b>INVESTMENT</b>	Willingness to invest resources · Shared responsibility · Data sharing agreements · Shared crisis management · Openness to innovation

**“The great strength of a residency program is that it allows the curators, the volunteers, the other regular staff around the big institutions, or even small institutions, to get used to this idea of working with Wikipedia.”**

**PAT HADLEY · WIKIMEDIAN IN RESIDENCE, YORK MUSEUMS TRUST**

PART IV

MENTORSHIP

# The Four M's Recipe for Success

Money, Metrics, Mentor, Message. The pillars that turn a fragile position into a lasting role.

**We are the external mentor while you grow the internal one.**

For six to twelve months we serve as guide, advisor, coach, troubleshooter, and mentor to the WIR, while we help you identify and equip the internal champion who will carry the work after we step back. That second layer is what gives the role its staying power.

**PART IV · MENTORSHIP**

# The Four M's Recipe for Success

A Wikipedian in Residence is one of the most exciting roles an institution can take on, and one of the hardest to sustain. Master these four pillars and you will lift your institution's public presence in ways that travel far beyond the role itself.

## 01 · Money

**Don't justify your existence. Prove your value.**

Longevity in this role depends on tying the work to the institution's bottom line. Existing as a Wikipedian in Residence is not enough on its own. The WIR has to prove value early and often. Start by naming where the funding comes from, whether internal budgets, grants, or partnerships. Then connect contributions to real, measurable returns. How does the work raise public visibility? How does it advance the organization's mission? When the WIR clearly drives growth or delivers on strategic goals, it stops being a nice-to-have and becomes a fixture.

### PRO TIP

Always be on the lookout for new funding opportunities. Institutions are far more likely to extend a role when they see the WIR can keep attracting resources.

## 02 · Metrics

**Numbers turn heads and open doors.**

On Wikipedia, data changes how the work is seen. The WIR needs numbers that tell stories and prompt action, not just sit on a spreadsheet. Pageviews, backlinks, and content reach are powerful indicators of impact. Translate them into stories people remember: how updates pull obscure collections into view, how new articles draw thousands of readers, how improved visibility opens new collaborations.

### PRO TIP

Pageviews are the headline, not the whole story. Pair them with metrics you can actually deliver: citations added, articles created and improved, Wikidata items and statements, languages an article appears in, and Commons reuse via GLAMorous and BaGLAMa 2 for participating institutions. Be wary of any metric you cannot independently measure with public tools.

**PART IV · MENTORSHIP**

# The Four M's, continued

## 03 · Mentor

### Find a champion who will fight for you.

No matter how skilled the WIR, they need an internal ally who believes in the mission. A mentor who understands what Wikipedia can do for the institution, and who has the clout to back the WIR up, is essential. This person will advocate for the WIR in rooms they cannot enter, and will keep the role on the radar when competing priorities arise. Do not stop with one mentor. Build a network. Cultivate relationships across departments. The more people who know and respect the work, the more secure and supported the role becomes.

#### PRO TIP

Organize cross-departmental Wikipedia editing sessions or lunch-and-learns to build engagement and rapport across the institution.

## 04 · Message

### Don't let the work be the best-kept secret.

One of the biggest mistakes a WIR can make is working in silence. Make sure people inside and outside the institution know about the value being created. Report on accomplishments, share case studies, post on social media, get successes into newsletters and internal reports. Steady communication keeps the role visible and the long-term benefits clear.

#### PRO TIP

Blogging or giving talks about the work spreads awareness inside and outside the institution, and often opens new doors for collaboration and funding.

## After year one

The strongest WIRs become institutional fixtures, not single-year experiments. Of the residencies we have supported, most that complete a full year extend in some form. Some shift to a smaller ongoing retainer, with the WIR returning for periodic projects. Some hire a successor and run continuously. The best convert the WIR's role into a permanent staff position.

**PART IV · MENTORSHIP**

## After year one, continued

A successful first year often means WikiBlueprint can step back. By month twelve we have typically transferred enough knowledge that the institution and the WIR can carry the work forward without ongoing consulting. From year two on, the program runs on the WIR's compensation alone, with the WikiBlueprint retainer gone. The annual cost drops by roughly a third, and the work gets better, because the institution has built real capability and the WIR has a full year of context to draw on.

The off-ramp matters as much as the on-ramp. A good residency leaves behind documented workflows, a trained internal point person, a published style guide, an active relationship with the Wikipedia community, and a runway of identified next projects.

### THE ROLE'S REAL REACH

Editing Wikipedia is the visible deliverable. The deeper work is changing how an institution thinks about its digital presence and its audience.

Master Money, Metrics, Mentor, and Message, and you turn a fragile position into a lasting one. A strong WIR lifts their institution, widens global access to knowledge, and opens new collaborations. The role's impact tends to reach further than anyone expected, often including the WIR themselves.

**“The Archives is involved with Wikipedia because that's where the people are.”**

**DAVID FERRIERO · 10TH ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES**

### **We stay available after the engagement ends.**

Year two often looks like an occasional advisory call rather than a retainer. We design the off-ramp alongside the on-ramp, so when the engagement closes, the institution has what it needs and knows where to find us if the unexpected comes up.

**PART IV - MENTORSHIP**

# The full lifecycle of a program

From internal runway through year two and beyond. The engagement has shape, and that shape determines whether the work compounds.

## Before - Internal runway

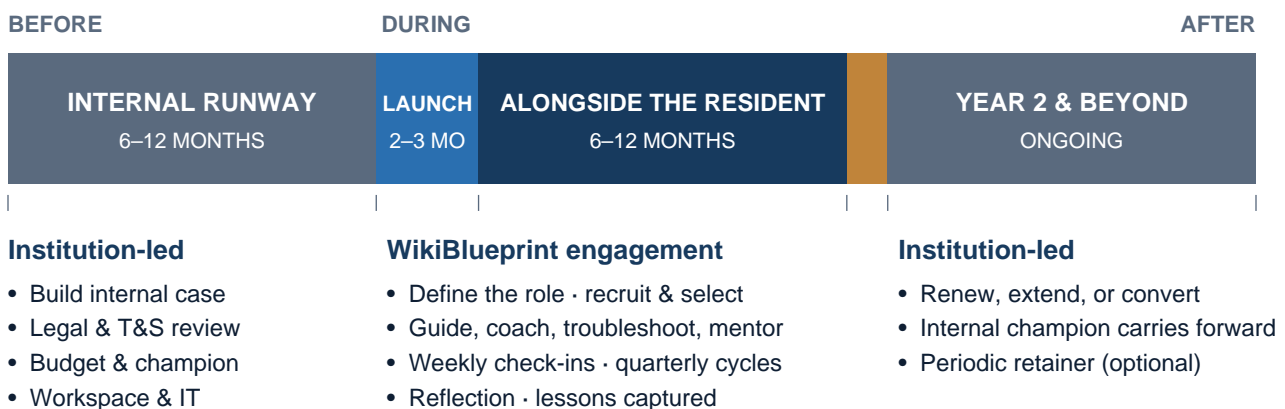
Six to twelve months that belong entirely to the institution. The case gets built internally, legal and trust & safety questions get answered, a budget gets approved, and an executive champion steps forward.

## During - The engagement

WikiBlueprint comes on two to three months before the WIR starts to define the role and run selection. Then six to twelve months alongside the WIR as guide, advisor, coach, troubleshooter, and mentor, with weekly check-ins and quarterly cycles. A short reflection phase closes the engagement and captures the lessons.

## After - Year two and beyond

The institution carries the work forward. The WIR continues, often at reduced cost. The internal champion who was identified during the engagement now leads. WikiBlueprint stays available on a periodic retainer if needed, but the program no longer depends on us.



The shape matters more than the duration. A program that respects the runway, runs the engagement with discipline, and plans the off-ramp from day one is a program the institution will renew and extend.

PART V

IMPACT

# Risk, Reward, and Realistic Returns

The honest accounting: the ten worries we hear most, examined; how residencies fail and how to prevent it; the numbers a strong WIR delivers; and an FAQ from buyers who have done this before.

**We build the habit of visibility.**

We help create the cadence of reports, highlights, and internal communications that make the WIR's work seen and appreciated inside the institution. The best predictor of whether a residency gets renewed is whether decision-makers can articulate its value. We make sure they can.

## PART V · IMPACT

# The worries, examined

Executive teams ask the same questions about Wikipedians in Residence. Some hold up; most don't, once you look at how the field has actually run for fifteen years. The ten below, examined.

- 01 Cost**

A dedicated WIR sounds expensive. A \$100,000 twelve-month engagement is one shape; a part-time WIR, intern program, supervised volunteers, or grant-funded staffing are others. The scope flexes to fit the budget. What matters is matching the work to what you can sustain.
- 02 Limited scope**

A WIR's focus on Wikipedia sounds narrow. Wikipedia work is research, writing, training, and community engagement, and those skills travel. **Where it lands:** Strong WIRs often contribute to social channels, internal comms, or the institution's own website.
- 03 Conflicting interests**

Paid editing sounds like a built-in conflict. Wikipedia's Conflict of Interest guideline names Wikipedians in Residence as an acceptable form when properly disclosed. Disclosure, neutrality, and community standing resolve the conflict by design.
- 04 Bias concerns**

A WIR could introduce bias. The community would catch it within hours; bias is the most-policed failure mode on the platform. **What actually happens:** A strong WIR becomes a defense against bias. The discipline shows up in citation choices, tone, and willingness to leave well-sourced criticism intact.
- 05 Community backlash**

The community sounds like it would object. It doesn't. Wikipedia's guidelines explicitly welcome WIRs from cultural and scientific institutions. WIRs disclose openly, build community standing, and follow normal processes. Engagement is the practice, not damage control.

## PART V · IMPACT

# The worries, continued

**06 Time investment**  
Onboarding sounds heavy. The actual lift is modest: two to four hours a week from a point person, plus initial orientation. **In practice:** The load distributes across staff. By month three, the WIR is generating work the institution can promote.

**07 Restricted impact**  
Wikipedia's content guidelines sound restrictive. They are exactly as restrictive as needed: notability, verifiability, neutrality. Strong WIRs deliver hundreds of articles and tens of millions of pageviews inside those rules. The guidelines focus the work; they don't cap it.

**08 Reliance on a single individual**  
Putting the program on one person sounds fragile. The whole point of a well-run residency is institutional capacity that outlasts the WIR's tenure. Documentation is a deliverable. Style guides, dashboards, and a trained internal point person mean the institution carries the work forward when the WIR moves on.

**09 High expectations**  
Stakeholders might expect too much. They will, if no one sets the frame. Wikipedia work is patient: pageviews build over months. **What actually happens:** A published quarterly plan with realistic targets and monthly highlight memos turn slow compounding into a visible drumbeat.

**10 Ethical considerations**  
Paid editing on a neutral platform sounds ethically uncomfortable. The community arrived at a clear answer over a decade ago: paid editing is acceptable when disclosed, mission-aligned, and policy-bound. Disclosure, neutrality discipline, and a refusal to scrub negative content keep the ethics clean.

## A NOTE ON KNOW-HOW

Best practices for running a WIR program exist, but aren't easy to find. Two shortcuts: talk to an institution that has hosted one, or hire a consultant who can compress years of trial and error.

## PART V · IMPACT

## How residencies fail

Honest failure modes from a decade of practice. None are inevitable. All become more likely when ignored. Each carries a defense.

- 01 The champion leaves**

The internal advocate who fought for the program takes another job or shifts portfolios. The role survives on momentum for a quarter, then loses budget. **The defense:** build a network of mentors from week one, not a single relationship. The Four M's section names this directly.
- 02 Scope overreach**

Early enthusiasm leads to commitments the WIR cannot meet by year-end. Trust erodes. The fix is a published quarterly work plan with realistic targets, reviewed in the weekly check-in. Say no in week three rather than miss the goal in month nine.
- 03 The WIR becomes a silo**

Work happens in the WIR's head, on the WIR's laptop, with no documented workflow. When they leave, the institution loses everything. **The defense:** documentation as a deliverable. Style guides, project pages, dashboards, written processes. Building institutional capacity is the point.
- 04 A controversial topic blows up**

The WIR edits a high-attention article and triggers a community dispute that draws press attention. The prevention is a published list of in-scope topics, agreed at the start with WikiBlueprint and the institution. Controversial topics are handled by community editors, not by a paid WIR.
- 05 Metrics stay shallow**

The program reports pageviews but nothing decision-useful. Leadership loses interest by Q3. **The defense:** the dashboard in Part IV. Citations added, articles created and improved, Wikidata items, language coverage, and Commons reuse. Numbers a Director can quote, drawn from public tools.
- 06 The wrap becomes the end**

The WIR finishes, the contract closes, and the work stops. Six months later the articles are out of date. Plan the year-two off-ramp from month one. Documented handoff, trained internal champion, optional ongoing retainer.

## PART V · IMPACT

# What a strong WIR delivers

Below are the headline results from one Wikipedian in Residence engagement for the scientific publisher Annual Reviews. One WIR. One year of focused work. Selection, execution, and mentorship handled with care.

<b>366</b> NEW ARTICLES CREATED	<b>2,200</b> PAGES EDITED	<b>2,910</b> CITATIONS ADDED
<b>342,000</b> WORDS WRITTEN	<b>104,000,000</b> PAGEVIEWS DELIVERED	<b>1</b> WIKIPEDIAN IN RESIDENCE

## WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN IN PRACTICE

**366 new articles** means 366 net new entries in the world's most-consulted reference work, each surfacing in search results and feeding AI summaries for years to come.

**2,910 citations added** means thousands of newly anchored, verifiable claims, the connective tissue Wikipedia depends on to stay credible.

**104 million pageviews** is, in ordinary digital marketing terms, a budget almost no institution could afford. Delivered by one person working ethically inside Wikipedia's rules.

## FROM A CLIENT

*“Working with the Wikipedia community to enrich knowledge in the encyclopedia is a specialist communication skill. WikiBlueprint has supported us in finding two Wikipedians in Residence, both highly qualified and motivated individuals who have worked tirelessly to add high quality citations to Wikipedia. If you ever get the chance to work with WikiBlueprint, take it.”*

**LIZ ALLEN** · Director of Strategic Development, Annual Reviews

**PART V · IMPACT**

## Questions from second-time buyers

Most of this guide answers the questions a first-time buyer asks. These are the harder ones we hear from institutions that have been doing this work for years, or that operate at the scale where every choice has downstream consequences.

### **Is the WIR our employee, a contractor, or something else?**

All three shapes work, and we help you pick. A W-2 hire integrates fastest and is what most large institutions choose. A 1099 contractor or fellowship arrangement gives flexibility on duration and benefits. Many residencies have been structured as grant-funded fellowships, paid internships, or visiting positions. We map the choice against your HR policies and what the WIR needs to do the work.

### **Can a grant fund this rather than our operating budget?**

Often, yes. Wikimedia Foundation has historically supported residencies through Project and Rapid grants. Knight, Mellon, and Sloan have funded Wikipedia-adjacent work. Many institutions co-fund with a foundation partner. We help you assess which funders match your scope and write the case if useful.

### **What happens when a donor or trustee has a Wikipedia article that needs work?**

Your WIR does not edit it. Articles about people with a financial relationship to the host institution sit firmly in conflict-of-interest territory. The WIR may suggest edits on the article's talk page with full disclosure, but the edits themselves are made by community editors or not at all. This is a bright line, not a judgment call. We brief leadership on it in writing before the residency starts.

### **We are a state-supported or ministry-aligned institution. Does that change anything?**

Yes, in some practical ways and not in others. The Wikipedia community treats edits from state-supported institutions the same way it treats edits from private ones: disclosure, neutrality, and standing in the community are what matter. What changes is the institutional side. Procurement runs through ministry-aligned channels rather than donor relationships. Mission alignment is with national strategy rather than trustee priorities. Reporting often goes upward to a ministry or foundation rather than to a board. We have worked inside these structures and adapt our scope, contracting, and reporting accordingly.

### **Our copyright situation is complicated. How does that play out?**

Most content sharing happens on Wikimedia Commons, which only accepts works under open licenses or in the public domain. Your WIR identifies what is safely shareable, navigates fair use limits for Wikipedia articles, and respects donor restrictions. For art museums and rights-licensing institutions, we write a rights protocol into the scope of work so the lines are clear from day one.

## **We have concerns about feeding AI systems with our content. Is that a real issue?**

Yes. Open-licensed content on Wikimedia Commons becomes AI training data. Wikipedia articles feed Google AI Overviews and large language models. For institutions that license images for revenue, the tradeoff is real and worth naming. Most decide that the reputational and reach benefits of being represented well in AI outputs outweigh the costs, especially for content they already make freely available. We help you decide what to share and what to hold back.

## **What does this look like in non-English Wikipedias?**

Different and important. Wikipedia exists in more than 300 languages and the patterns vary: Arabic Wikipedia has distinct community norms and real coverage gaps in Gulf and Islamic history; Spanish Wikipedia handles citations differently from English; German Wikipedia has stricter notability standards; Chinese Wikipedia faces unique access challenges. For institutions whose audiences are global, multilingual strategy belongs in the plan from the start. We coordinate with local Wikimedia chapters and editors in the languages your audience reads.

## **How does a WIR program work at a federated institution with many units?**

Carefully. Large institutions like the Smithsonian have run multiple WIRs across units simultaneously. The pattern that works: a coordinating champion at the institutional level, point people inside each unit, and a shared documentation layer so units learn from each other. We design the governance with you. The bigger the institution, the more this matters.

## **Why not just hire a contractor directly, or do this in-house?**

Both are real options, and worth taking seriously. A senior Wikipedia on contract can produce good work; if you have one in-house already and the bandwidth to manage them, you may not need a consultancy at all. What you'll be doing yourself: writing the position description in a way that attracts strong candidates from inside the community, screening for community standing (easy to miss without context), navigating the policy edges around paid editing, designing the metrics dashboard, training the internal champion, and handling community pushback if it comes. WikiBlueprint exists for institutions that want those parts done by people who have done them before, repeatedly, and who carry the community standing to make new edits stick. Other consultancies vary widely in that last dimension, and the community's view is what determines whether your WIR's work survives. We are a member of the Wikimedia Consultants Network. Wikimedia chapters can help with grants and introductions but rarely provide hands-on program design. The shortest version: if you've done this before, you may not need us. If you haven't, the question is whether the cost of learning the field yourself is higher or lower than the cost of bringing in someone who already has.

## **What if our WIR or the program itself gets attacked on Wikipedia, not just an article?**

It happens, rarely, and it's survivable when handled correctly. The most common version is a community editor opening a discussion on the Conflict of Interest noticeboard or AfC questioning whether the WIR's edits are sufficiently disclosed or sufficiently neutral. The right response is the same one we use throughout: engage openly on-wiki, point to the disclosure on the WIR's user page, point to the contributions themselves, and let the community evaluate. Two things kill a residency in these moments: defensiveness from the institution, and silence from the WIR. Both signal something to hide. We brief leadership in writing about how these moments work before the residency starts, so no one is surprised. In a decade of WIR programs across the field, the residencies that ended badly almost always ended because the institution panicked, not because the community was unfair.

### **What if an editorial dispute about our institution hits the press?**

Engagement, not silence. The WIR continues to disclose openly, the community editors who handle controversial topics do their work, and leadership communicates internally about what is happening and why. We help you draft holding statements if needed. The worst response is to delete, suppress, or try to game the system. The fastest path through a Wikipedia controversy is to keep showing up properly.

### **How do we wind down a program that is not working?**

Honestly and on a timeline. Most program weaknesses are visible by month four. If the work is not landing, we name it in the quarterly review, recommend either a recalibration or an off-ramp, and help you communicate the decision internally without blame attaching to the WIR. A well-ended program preserves the option to restart later. A program that drifts to an end usually does not.

### **We have done this before. What does year three or year five look like?**

Different from year one. By year three, the internal champion is doing the institutional work and the WIR is doing more advanced projects: Wikidata infrastructure, multilingual coordination, advocacy for open access policy, training other staff. By year five, the role is often part-time or project-based, with the institution carrying the day-to-day work. We shape engagements differently for mature programs.

#### **If your question isn't here, it probably has an answer.**

Most of what we do is help institutions navigate situations that look unprecedented and turn out not to be. A thirty-minute call is the fastest way to find out whether yours is one of them.

## **WHAT A FIRST CALL COVERS**

**Your situation, in your words.** What you've already tried, what's blocked, who internally cares about the outcome.

**What a program could look like.** Scope, shape, cost band, timeline. Honest about what fits and what doesn't.

**Whether we're the right partner.** Sometimes the answer is yes. Sometimes it's a chapter, a contractor, or another consultancy. Either way you leave with a clearer next step.

## PART V · IMPACT

# Why this is worth doing

The worries are real and the failures are nameable. The upside is larger, and it compounds.

- 01 The reach is unlike anything else an institution can buy.**

Wikipedia receives more than 18 billion pageviews a month in over 300 languages. A single WIR working ethically inside the rules can deliver tens of millions of those pageviews in a year. Compare the cost per impression against any other channel and the math is not close.
- 02 The platform is built to last.**

Wikipedia and its sister projects hold trillions of data points and millions of articles, with a fifteen-year track record of legal stability and clear open-license protections on Wikimedia Commons. The infrastructure you are contributing to is not going anywhere.
- 03 The expertise exists and is reachable.**

Wikipedians in Residence are senior editors with tens of thousands of contributions and deep fluency in the policies on neutrality, sourcing, citations, and conflict of interest. The community of practice is small, accessible, and ready to work with institutions that take the craft seriously.
- 04 The upside arrives in unexpected forms.**

After one edit-a-thon focused on a single artist's work, a major American museum received a significant donation from the artist's estate. Strong residencies open doors no one drew on the org chart: new partnerships, surfaced collaborators, foundation interest, press the institution didn't go looking for.
- 05 The world is being indexed right now.**

Wikipedia is the most heavily weighted source in nearly every large language model in production. It feeds Google Knowledge Panels, voice assistants, and AI summaries. The institutions that show up well there in 2026 will show up well in the machine-mediated decade that follows. The ones that don't, won't.

**The risks are known and manageable. The upside compounds. The institutions that have done this work are the ones whose names you already trust. The page that follows is about how WikiBlueprint helps you join them.**

**THE PARTNER**

# Working with WikiBlueprint

WikiBlueprint is a Wikipedia consultancy that works with institutions across sectors. We help them recruit, support, and renew Wikipedians in Residence. Our clients range from scientific publishers to national museums and public libraries.

<b>SCIENCE</b>	Annual Reviews (two engagements) · Cochrane · MBH Foundation
<b>CULTURE</b>	Equis · Smithsonian (biodiversity)
<b>ART</b>	Pérez Art Museum Miami
<b>LIBRARIES</b>	Milton Public Library · West Virginia University Library

## International work

WikiBlueprint also works internationally, including with universities and cultural institutions across the MENA region and the Gulf, in the UAE, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Many international engagements are held in confidence at the client's request. Wikipedia coverage of local history, institutions, and figures is thinnest precisely where the leverage is greatest. For institutions whose audiences are global, or whose subjects are underrepresented in the languages their stakeholders read, the frontier is wide open.

## What we do

<p><b>Selection</b></p> <p>We write the position description that attracts the right candidates, source from inside the global Wikipedia community, and assess fit on the dimensions that matter most.</p>	<p><b>Onboarding &amp; strategy</b></p> <p>We integrate your WIR into the institution, set the cadence of activities and check-ins, and build a quarterly plan that aligns Wikipedia work with your organizational goals.</p>
<p><b>Mentorship</b></p> <p>We coach WIRs through the Four M's: Money, Metrics, Mentor, and Message. We make sure the role becomes lasting, not fragile.</p>	<p><b>Measurement</b></p> <p>We define the metrics that travel inside your institution, set up the dashboards, and produce the reports that turn unseen work into visible impact.</p>

## THE PARTNER

# How we work

We are members of the Wikimedia Consultants Network. We work strictly in an advisory capacity, and we hold ourselves to a small set of bright lines that protect both our credibility and yours.

## WHAT WIKIBLUEPRINT WILL NOT DO

A small set of bright lines we hold without exception, so you know exactly what you are buying.

**We do not edit Wikipedia on a client's behalf.** We advise. The WIR or community editors do the work. That separation is the ethical core of how this field is built to function.

**We do not remove properly sourced negative content.** Wikipedia is not a reputation management service, and treating it like one is the fastest way to break a client's standing in the community.

**We do not engage in advocacy editing.** Even small departures from neutrality get caught by community editors, and the damage outlasts the edit.

**We do not use AI to write Wikipedia content for publication.** Every edit needs a human author who stands behind it, by both Wikipedia's policy and our practice.

## WHAT WE WILL ARGUE FOR

Wikipedia's neutrality is not silence. Articles can be inaccurate, missing context, weighted toward outdated coverage, or skewed by recency bias. When the case is real, we help institutions raise it on the article's talk page, with sources, with disclosure, and through community editors. Factual corrections, missing context, undue weight, and recency balance are all fair to argue. The bright line is that we argue through process, not around it.

## COLOPHON

# About This Guide

*The WikiBlueprint Guide to a Successful Wikipediaian in Residence: Selection, Execution, Mentorship, and Impact* draws together and edits a series of essays first published by WikiBlueprint on the Wikipediaian in Residence role. The aim is to make a decade of accumulated practice usable in one sitting.

Edited and produced by Jake Orlowitz, founder of WikiBlueprint. See page 5 for the full author bio.

## Further reading

<b>Wikipediaian in Residence Overview</b>	Outreach Wiki
<b>Wikipediaian in Residence Description</b>	Meta-wiki
<b>Wikipedia Workbook for Cultural Institutions</b>	Mary Mark Ockerbloom, 2024
<b>An Auckland Museum Wikimedia Strategy</b>	Mike Dickison

## In the media

<b>The New York Times</b>	<i>Gerald R. Ford Library Hires a Wikipediaian in Residence</i>
<b>Philanthropy.com</b>	<i>Wikipediaian in Residence Helps Share Smithsonian Archives</i>
<b>The Conversation</b>	<i>On the job with a Wikipediaian in Residence</i>
<b>TED Blog</b>	<i>Meet TED's Wikipedians in Residence</i>
<b>InfoToday</b>	<i>What It's Like to Be a Wikipediaian in Residence</i>
<b>Cochrane</b>	<i>The Cochrane–Wikipedia Partnership in 2023</i>
<b>Montreal Gazette</b>	<i>Concordia's Wikipediaian in Residence has a lot on her plate</i>

**ONE MORE THING**

# The world wants what your institution knows.

A Wikipedian in Residence is the cleanest way to deliver it: ethically, sustainably, and at a scale very few other functions inside an organization can match. When you're ready to talk through what a program could look like at your institution, we'd be glad to listen.

**“We are doing the same thing for the same reason, for the same people, in the same medium.”**

**LIAM WYATT · THE FIRST WIKIPEDIAN IN RESIDENCE, BRITISH MUSEUM, 2010**

## START THE CONVERSATION

**Schedule a free virtual meeting:** [calendly.com/jorlowitz](https://calendly.com/jorlowitz)

**Email:** [jorlowitz@wikiblueprint.com](mailto:jorlowitz@wikiblueprint.com)

**Web:** [wikiblueprint.com](https://wikiblueprint.com)

### A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

If you have read this far, you are already further along than most institutions ever get. The next step is the easiest one: a thirty-minute call where we listen to what you are trying to do and tell you honestly what would and would not work. No deck, no pitch, no follow-up unless you want one.

### **Jake Orlovitz**

*Founder, WikiBlueprint*