

Funding Freedom of Expression – An IFEX Overview

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Summary results of a survey to IFEX members on FoE funding experiences
Research carried out for IFEX by the Cox International Center at the University of Georgia

Funded by the Open Society Institute

IFEX is pleased to share the results of a survey of more than 60 diverse freedom of expression (FoE) groups – all members of the IFEX network – looking into experiences, challenges and opportunities in funding free expression work.

When we started this investigation we saw it as a chance to help open or broaden the conversation between FoE groups and donors about funding realities – to look into how the FoE funding landscape has changed in recent years, benefitting from the experience of IFEX members in identifying challenges that the FoE sector is currently facing.

About the Study – A Representative Response Rate

Funded by the Open Society Institute, IFEX contracted the Cox International Center at the University of Georgia in the United States to undertake this survey of IFEX members in English, Spanish, French and Russian. The response rate was a very high 77.5 percent. The final sample error for the survey is 2.8 percent, meaning that most of the results for the full 80 organisations surveyed should be within plus or minus 2.8 percent of the reported values – and are therefore likely to represent the responses of the whole IFEX membership with minimal error.

This document presents key highlights from the overall findings – the full research report is available online at: http://www.ifex.org/international/2009/07/08/cox_center_funding.pdf

Key Findings and Questions to Explore

What we found is a situation where IFEX members are finding it harder now than five years ago to acquire the basic resources to carry out their work – core funding – and what appears to be a shrinking field of possible donors specifically supporting FoE work. Changing donor priorities, and finding a suitable fit with member work, is the single biggest funding challenge IFEX members face.

When funding *is* available, it is most often time-limited project funding that does not contribute to organisation running costs. The increasing administrative requirements of donors reported by the respondents overtax the resources of organisations that often do not have staff dedicated to proposal writing and donor liaison.

IFEX members say they believe they face an uncertain funding future – very few believe their core funding situation will improve in the coming years. As one respondent said:

“It’s just getting tougher and tougher, especially for core needs. Who will pay the salaries, rent and supplies?”

This funding snapshot is a first step to open a dialogue between FoE groups and donors on key resource issues facing the sector:

- **How can we work towards a sustainable funding base for the sector?**
- **Has there been a real shift in funding of FoE issues?**
- **Are other issues superceding FoE – or is it that groups aren’t making an effective case to funders?**
- **How are the increased administrative requirements – forms, stringency, monitoring, evaluation – having an impact on the work of the FoE sector?**

Selected results charts presented here provide more detailed information on issues uncovered through the research.

We think that FoE groups will take comfort from learning through this research that they are not alone in the funding challenges and frustrations they face, and we hope they will find strength from the voices reflected here that reflect common concerns as well as benefit from other opinions.

Thank you to all of the IFEX members who took the time to participate in the survey and contributed to forming this picture of the FoE funding landscape. We especially thank Open Society Institute for funding this research and the Cox Center for implementing it.

IFEX Clearing House

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IFEX Funding Survey – Fast Facts

- The vast majority of IFEX members say it is more difficult now than a year ago to find project funding. Half say it is more difficult now than five years ago to find project funding.
- A majority of IFEX members also say it is more difficult now versus a year ago to raise core funding. Half say it is more difficult now versus five years ago.
- The dominant source for both project and core funding is foundations outside the country of the member.
- Members say that half of their budget comes from projects, and about a quarter comes from core funding. They say this is pretty much unchanged from five years ago.
- Open Society Institute dominates the list of funders for IFEX members – five years ago and now, with the National Endowment for Democracy figuring prominently also.
- Almost all IFEX members say they face challenges in finding funding. About half say funders are requiring them to do things that they did not require five years ago.
- Members say that funding sources that had supported their work in the past are no longer supporting them.
- Five IFEX members have neither a full-time nor a part-time person for budget and finance. Twenty-two do not have anyone handling fund-raising full-time.
- While many IFEX members found it hard to make predictions about future funding, only about one in four expect project funding to increase in the next five years and an even smaller ratio expect core funding to increase in the same time period.
- Region makes a difference in terms of survey responses. Only two of the six IFEX member respondents from the Middle East, for example, indicated they were finding it more difficult to obtain project funds, and only four of the nine African members reported it was more difficult. Members elsewhere reported more difficulty in finding project funding.
- Age of the organization also matters. The IFEX organizations founded from 1991 through 2000 reported the most difficulty in finding funding, with 18 of 22 saying it is more difficult now to find project funding than a year ago.