

Funding Freedom of Expression – An IFEX Overview

Presented at the Global Forum on Freedom of Expression

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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/funding_trends/

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.

Q9 If possible, please identify your top three funding sources this year.

Funder	Number of Mentions
Open Society Institute	15
National Endowment for Democracy	11
Memberships	7
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	6
UNESCO	6
European Union	4
Other activities	4
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	4
Ford Foundation	3
Foundations (unspecified)	3
Free Voice	3
Government	3
Individual donations	3
British foreign aid	2
Corporate sponsors	2
International Center for Journalists	2
Knight Foundation	2

Q11 Do you face challenges in finding funding? Yes: 88%

What are your biggest challenges in finding funding?

Comments	Number
Donor focus/priority/policy does not match member needs	22
Funding limited/No core, administrative, multi-year support	17
Time/Resources required to apply	11
Hard to find information on donors/Hard to find funding	10
Economy/Market downturn	9
Government policy or political situation	7
Competition	6
Member organisation not aligned with funder requirements	4

Q12 Are funders today requiring you to do things that they did not require you to do five years ago? **Yes: 52%**

Please describe the additional requirements funders are making of you today compared to five years ago.

Comments	Number
Increased reporting and paperwork	12
More financial requirements: Reporting/Budgeting/Documentation	8
Evaluation and monitoring: Demonstrating measurable success	8
Struggling to keep up with changing donor issue focus	6
Demonstrating sound organization structure and governance	3
Imposition of donor priorities	2
Time limits imposed	1

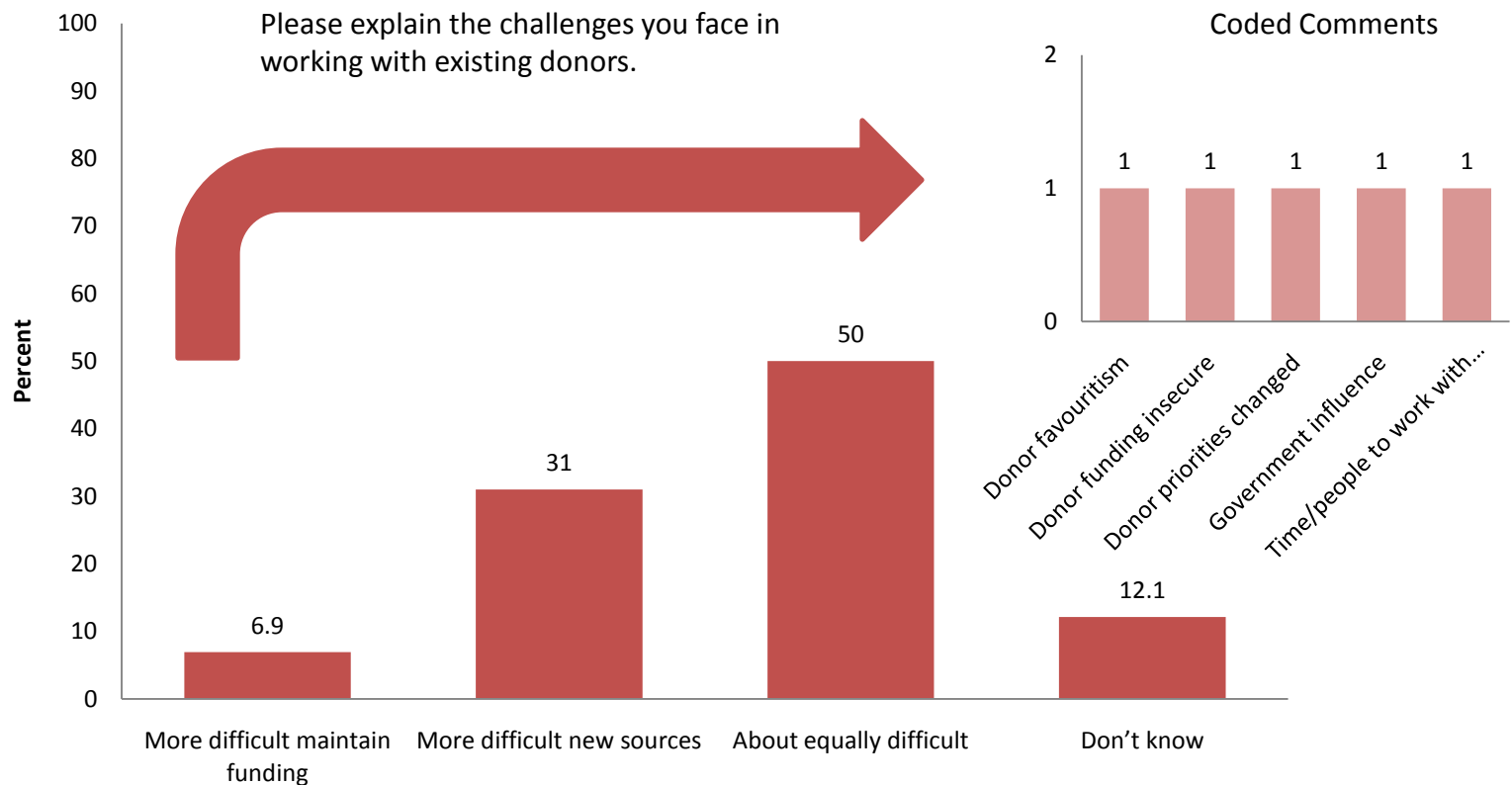
Q13 Are there funding sources or organisations that have supported your work in the past that are no longer supporting you? **Yes: 71%**

Please indicate the reasons that were given when the source or organisation discontinued funding your work.



Comments	Number
Funder priorities/policies changed	23
Project completed	9
Donor has decreased/insufficient funding	5
Economy/market downturn	3
Lack of continuity at donor	3
Bypassing international organizations for local	2
Member focus changed	2
Member terminated relationship (credibility/sought new funders)	2
No specific reason	2
Competition	1
Perceived lack of sustainability of grantee	1
Time limit for funding	1

Q14 In general, which have you found more difficult in the last five years: maintaining funding levels from existing donors, or obtaining funding from new sources, or has it been about equally difficult to obtain funding from both existing and new donors?




Q15 Are there particular areas of freedom of expression work that you feel are becoming more difficult to fund than in the past? Yes: 48%

What are those areas?

Comments	Number
Advocacy and campaigning	7
Education/Training	4
FoE violations reporting	4
Capacity building support	3
Meetings and conferences	3
Press freedom	3
Journalists at risk	2
Research	2
Broadcast media restrictions	1
Cartoonist rights	1
Legal defense of FoE	1
Right to offend	1
Soft censorship	1
U.S. organizations not funded	1

Q15 Are there particular areas of freedom of expression work that you feel are becoming more difficult to fund than in the past? **Yes: 48%**



Why are these difficult to find funding for?



Comments	Number
Funder priorities not same	13
Hard to show concrete results	7
Public Perception	3
Government	1
Economy/Market downturn	1
Other	1

Q16 Are there particular areas of freedom of expression work that you feel are becoming easier to fund than in the past? **Yes: 31%**

What are those areas?

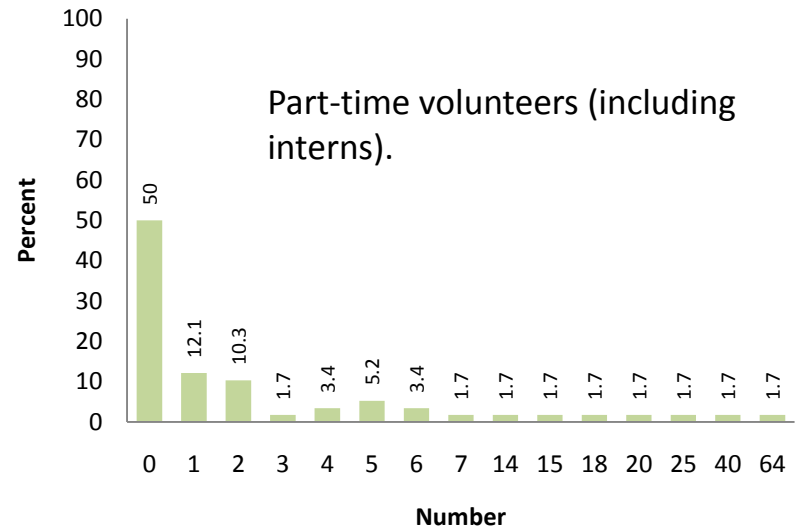
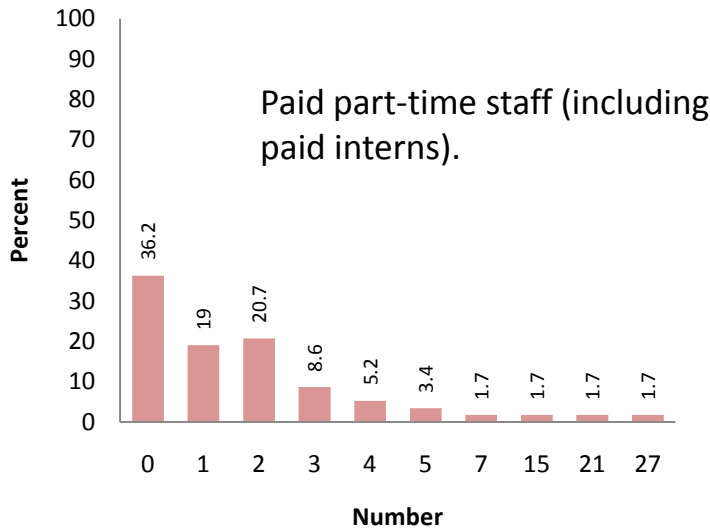
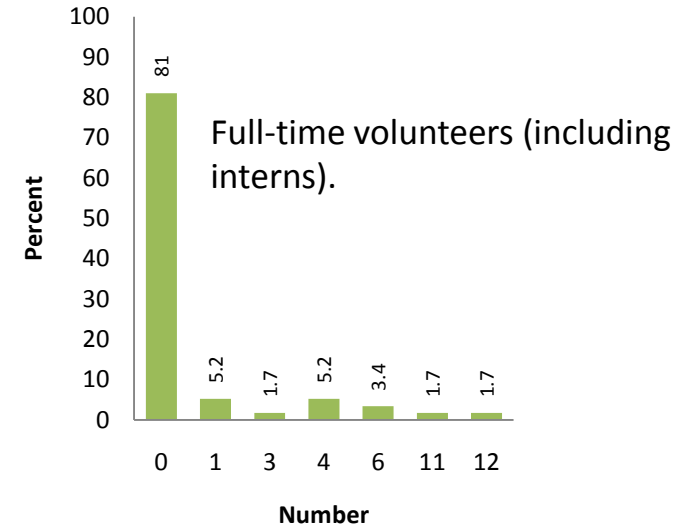
Comments	Number
Access to information	4
Bloggers/Citizen journalism	4
Monitoring/Reporting violations	4
Legal work	3
Campaigns	1
Censorship	1
Good governance promotion	1
Health related issues	1
Office equipment	1
Organizational development	1
Projects on free speech for youth	1
Public hearing	1
Public participation	1
Regional work in the Global South	1
Studies, publications, consultations	1
Writers in exile	1

Q16 Are there particular areas of freedom of expression work that you feel are becoming easier to fund than in the past? **Yes: 31%**

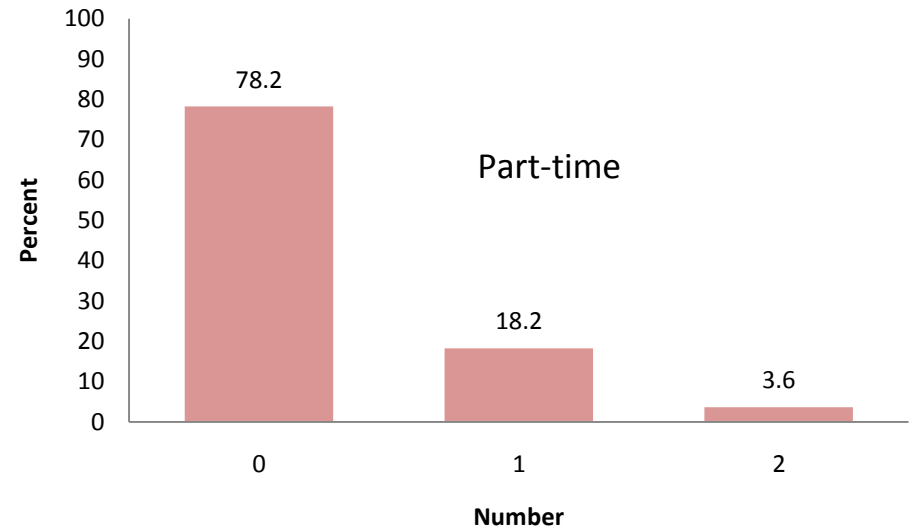
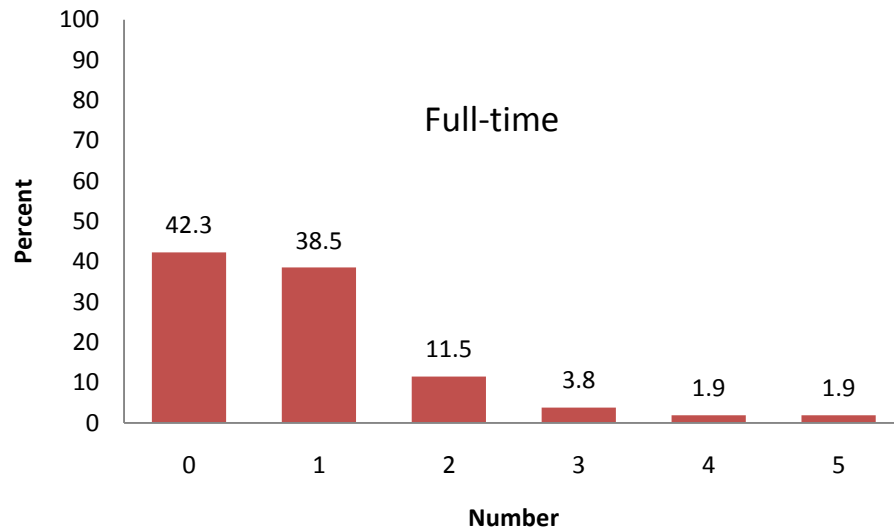
Why are these easier to find funding for?

Comment	Number
Matches funder interest	7
Visibility and impact	5
Tangible and concrete	2
Fashionable to focus on access to information	1
New problem arising in mass media	1
Research shows American youth insensitive to Article 19	1
Topics are relevant in region	1
Other	2

Q19 How many persons work in your organisation on freedom of expression-related issues?



Q21 How many persons in your organisation are responsible for fundraising?



Q28 If you have any further comments or reflections on funding trends and working with donors that you would like to share with IFEX and its members, please provide them.

Most productive are personal introductions with donor reps and key IFEX players in policy development for free speech.

Our concern is about how we can insure more funding stability; and how can we diversify our source of fund, especially how can we encourage the private sector in our country to start investing in our projects in a professional way... till now we still count on outside sources of funding.

We need training in the area of proposal writing on how to be very effective with our proposals.

We don't have vast experience in funding that we would be able to share with others. Members of our organization are journalists and some academics.

To persuade donors to restart funding core funding and institutional support. Weak organisations would not be able to execute programs.

Q28 Continued

The power relationship between donors and donees sometimes inhibits honest dialogue which is crucial if we are all working towards the same end. Openness to disagree and find creative ways to work together within new challenges or constraints is difficult in this paradigm. There are sometimes geographic trends with donors (Central Asia and Middle East) where funds are funneled excessively to one region sometimes leaving long term successes in other regions in jeopardy. Often an organization is used as a project delivery system for some donors without consideration of the true human resource and other costs it incurs in ensuring a successful project. Ongoing duplication of work in the sector means we need to find valid ways to share the work (the competition for funds among donors). Unreal timelines for success in projects sometimes forces the natural development of a project.

Thank you for this initiative. The lack of funds is our main problem as regards freedom of expression. Other than the support we receive from IFEX, we have had to work on a volunteer basis, supplementing our income with other consultative work. ..(W)e focus on the plight and struggle of those who are not benefitting from development and are being “left behind”, such as the poor, women and indigenous people. We hope that the analysis we provide serves to educate and enlighten funders.

Analysis of Responses to Key Questions by Focus of Member

