



Request for WFM Executive Committee Skills Inventory

In April 2008, the WFM Executive Committee agreed on a process for ensuring co-opted members to the Council and EC met the professional and oversight needs of those bodies and of the Movement as a whole. Executive Director Bill Pace suggested that rather than filling seats as honorary or traditional acknowledgements of support, there should be an attempt to determine what governance skills and needs – fundraising and investment experience, for example – were not sufficiently met through the electoral process.

Executive Committee Chair Keith Best and Council Chair Jim Christie suggested creating a skills audit to identify which Executive Committee and Council members bring specific and essential skills sets to the Movement's governance. Such skills could be brought on to the Council and Executive Committee through co-options. Overall, this skills audit would inform the co-option process by ensuring such individuals have supporters' interest at the forefront; the necessary non-profit management and governance skills, and who provide broad geographic representation. (The WFM Statutes do not require the co-options arise only from within the Council's membership; those bodies may thus co-opt individuals from outside who bring the necessary skills to the table.)

Mr. Best suggested that an ideal board profile could be suggested for the co-option process, informed by the results of the skills audit. The following summary of the initial audit results provides the Executive Committee an informed opportunity to do this at the November WFM Council meeting.

Results of WFM Executive Committee Inventory


In July 2008, members of the WFM Executive Committee (EC) completed the skills audit as the first group of Councilors requested to do so.

One-third of the current EC have been on the Council since prior to 1980; another third joined during the 1980s, and the remaining members became Councilors between 1992 and 2002. So it is not surprising that almost all EC members feel they have a strong grasp of WFM history, statutes and policies and understand the broader membership of the Movement.

However, in their oversight roles, EC members are less confident. Only one-third would suggest they have a strong understanding of the laws affecting WFM activities in the United States and the Netherlands (where WFM is legally registered), and a full one-third of the EC feels they have little or no knowledge or need training in understanding WFM's collaboration with like-minded organizations.

All members of the EC feel they have at least some knowledge or understanding of the history of the United Nations, other institutions, and civil society actors. But fewer than half would consider themselves qualified at a senior level. In terms of other global institutions that WFM considers integral complements to the United Nations, only one member of the EC ranks their understanding at a senior level.

In terms of nonprofit management skills, several EC members noted their experience as a paid staff member of another nonprofit, often at a senior level. EC members had high levels of confidence in their self-assessment of Board-staff relationship skills, followed by operational management skills and their experience in building coalitions. Less confidence was expressed in EC members' understanding of nonprofit membership and standards or financial management. Lastly, and reflecting the earlier noted lack of confidence in their oversight roles, EC members scored themselves lowest in understanding program monitoring and evaluation.



In comparison to the nonprofit management skills, EC members were also asked to assess their skill sets in nonprofit governance. A majority of EC members contribute their time and energy as a member of other nonprofit Boards as well, several in a leadership capacity (as a Board or committee chair). Here, EC members considered their skills to be highest in Board leadership, followed respectively by skills in strategic planning, Board-staff relationships, and public relations. However, in contrast with their self-assessed abilities in Board leadership, EC members ranked leadership development skills as one of their weakest areas; a majority recognized this deficiency and indicated an interest in being more involved in this area within WFM. Not surprising, fundraising, the bane of nonprofit governance, was ranked by EC members as their weakest governance skill overall.

The EC is a highly educated group; all respondents indicated having a post-graduate, doctoral or professional degree. Several professional backgrounds are represented among EC members, including business management, education, government/civil service, human resources, information technology, and legal skills.

A majority of EC members assessed their research, strategic planning and writing skills at a senior level. Fewer than half however noted such confidence in their budget-setting, fundraising, marketing or human resources skills. (This last contrasts with the self-assessment of most EC members in having strong Board-staff relationship skills.) On the very bottom, senior level skills in investment management, information technology, and grant writing are mostly absent among EC members. These responses correlate strongly with others that show high level of “academic” skills but a poor representation of strong managerial or oversight skills.

The language proficiency among EC members reflects the anecdotal view of international affairs, with all members indicating a working or proficient knowledge of English and French. (Other languages spoken by EC members at a proficient level or above include Italian, Tamil, Welsh, Danish, Spanish, and Armenian.) Two EC members, having between them high proficiency in French, English or Italian, noted having senior level experience in translation/interpretation.

EC members are actively involved as global citizens, but with some short-comings that reflect the Movement’s presence globally. Many indicated having been involved in political or civil society efforts, but for the majority, these efforts were only in North America or Europe; only a few indicated such experience in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Latin America, where WFM remains poorly represented, is likewise a region where current members of Movement’s leadership have the least professional engagement.

Both in undertaking this audit of their skills and experience and completing the audit, WFM’s Executive Committee members have recognized their responsibility in ensuring that the Movement has experienced, skills leadership. A majority indicated their need and willingness to be involved in other areas of the Movement’s work. Reflecting the scholarly backgrounds of most members, policy review and program development scored highest. Several indicated an interest in being more informed and involved in the coalition building efforts undertaken by WFM, reflecting the expressed lack of knowledge about this area. A handful of EC members asked to be part of the membership, public relations and financial work of the Movement. Lastly, being involved in the critical need of fundraising received a very telling response rate – zero.

In reviewing the audit results during their August 2008 meeting, the EC again agreed to request that members of the Council also participate in the skills audit to provide a broader, more inclusive picture of WFM leadership and their skills. At the EC’s request, the Credentials, Nominations and Statutes committee will review all responses and provide recommendations to the EC and Council to better inform WFM’s leaders in their co-option decision-making.