

Landscape of no-fee open access publishing in Africa

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Access Programme



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Overview of open access (OA) journals in Africa that do not charge fees for either authors or readers (often referred to as Diamond OA journals).

The study is based on survey responses from 199 journals, 21 institutional, national and continental platforms that host Diamond OA journals, and 25 country reports with information about current funding and financial sustainability approaches and challenges, institutional in-kind support, incentives, and collaborations among Diamond OA journals, needs and strategies to advance Diamond OA in Africa.

Conducted as a part of the three-year ['Collaboration for sustainable open access publishing in Africa'](#) project (Nov 2023- Oct 2026), implemented by EIFL, AJOL and WACREN with support from Wellcome.

<https://eifl.net/resources/eifl-landscape-study-no-fee-open-access-publishing-africa>

LANDSCAPE OF NO-FEE OPEN ACCESS PUBLISHING IN AFRICA

Landscape of no-fee open access publishing in Africa

Summary of findings

Introduction and methodology

Overview of Diamond OA journals

Funding and sustainability, institutional support and incentives, collaborations among Diamond OA journals

This study provides an overview of open access (OA) journals in Africa that do not charge fees for either authors or readers (often referred to as Diamond OA journals). It is based on survey responses from 199 journals, 21 institutional, national and continental platforms that host Diamond OA journals, and 25 country reports with information about current funding and financial sustainability approaches and challenges, institutional in-kind support, incentives and collaborations among Diamond OA journals, needs and strategies to advance Diamond OA.

This landscape study was conducted as a part of the three-year ‘[Collaboration for sustainable open access publishing in Africa](https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/)’ project (November 2023- October 2026), implemented by EIFL, AJOL (African Journals Online) and WACREN (the West and Central African Research and Education Network) with support from Wellcome. The study informed and guided us in our planning for developing and delivering a participatory funding approach to strengthen the quality and sustainability of African Diamond OA publishing while maintaining its diversity. The project will also strengthen national and regional collaboration on Diamond OA and seek to secure funding commitments from African governments and institutions by embedding support for Diamond OA in open science policies.

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/landscape-no-fee-open-access-publishing-africa>

Editorial quality and research integrity/
publication ethics in Diamond OA journals

Technical service efficiency of Diamond OA
journals

Visibility and discoverability (including
indexation) of Diamond OA journals

Challenges, funding needs and support
required to make Diamond OA journals more
sustainable

Platforms scope, disciplines and inclusion
criteria

Platforms personnel, incentives, funding,
institutional support, sustainability and
collaborations

Technical service efficiency of platforms

Visibility and discoverability of platforms

See the [full report \(PDF\)](#). The main findings and highlights are presented below.

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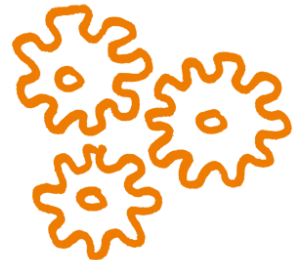
[Challenges, unmet funding needs and support required to make platforms more sustainable](#)

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/landscape-no-fee-open-access-publishing-africa>

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Country reports can be found in the [full \(PDF\) version of the report](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12792474) (also <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12792474>).



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Editorial quality and research integrity/publication ethics in Diamond OA journals

Technical service efficiency of Diamond OA journals

Most journals that responded to our survey are relatively small in terms of their annual output: 64.8% of the responding journals published up to 20 articles and 31.7% published 11–20 articles in 2023.

About 60% of the respondents rely on volunteer work fully or partially. More than half of the respondents who do have a dedicated unit responsible for publishing with employed staff (30.2%), still rely on volunteer work. Interestingly, a comparison with data relating to staff size shows that those with 2–5 team members (38 of 61) and those who have more than 30 team members (10 of 18) mostly rely on volunteer work, either fully or partially.

Institutional funding: 45.7% of the respondents have institutional funding provided either through permanent (24.6%) or periodically negotiated subsidies (21.1%) from the journal's primary institution's base.

The study outlines other sources of funding for Diamond OA journals that could be aspirational, e.g. donations, membership and partner support, training income or, (depressingly) personal money.

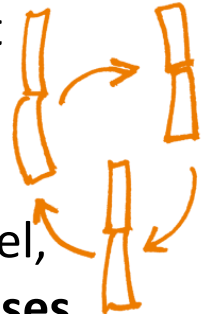
Sustainability: Almost equal numbers of respondents see their funding sources as stable or very stable (40.1%) and unstable or very unstable (39.2%). Most journals (71.4%) do not have an annual approved budget. The majority of the respondents (56.8%) have a journal sustainability plan. The study describes major financial sustainability challenges that also include global reach and visibility challenges, human resources and volunteer work challenges, administrative and organizational challenges, lack of strategic and sustainability planning skills, technical challenges and training needs.

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/summary-findings>

Institutional in-kind support and incentives

Institutional in-kind support: The most common types of support from journal host organizations include **general IT services** (used by 52.3% respondents), **service-specific IT services** - publishing platforms, websites and other tools (45.7%), and **facilities and premises** (45.7%). The majority of journals (57.8%) rely on multiple forms of support provided by the host organization, while 7% report receiving no support.

Institutional incentives: Almost a quarter of the responding journals reported that their institutions provided incentives for journal personnel, e.g. **additional points during evaluation/promotion, allowances, bonuses and honoraria, and reduction in regular work and working hours** (including teaching load and institutional administrative work).



Collaborations among Diamond OA journals

More than three quarters of the respondents (77.4%) would consider collaborating with other organizations in one or more areas mentioned in the survey. Those who would not collaborate in any of these areas account for 17.1%, while 5.5% said they didn't know.

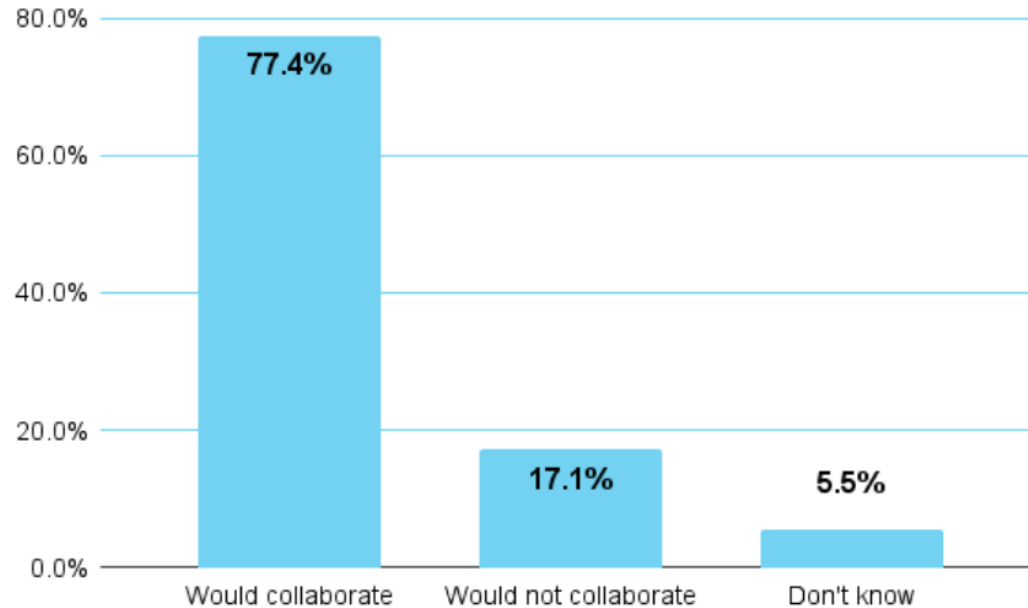


Figure 5. The willingness of journals to collaborate

Most journals would collaborate on training, support and/or advice on publishing policies and best practice (115, 57.8%); IT services (108; 54.3%), production (103; 51.8%), communication (95; 47.7%) and editorial services (90; 45.2%), while only 20% are interested in collaboration relating to administrative, legal and financial services.

Table 8. Potential collaboration areas

Collaboration areas	# journals ready to collaborate
Editorial services (selection of manuscripts, peer-review, plagiarism checking services, etc.)	90
Production services (copy-editing, proofreading, typesetting, metadata, etc.)	103
IT services (submission system, platform, website, etc.)	108
Communication services (marketing/dissemination, social media, etc.)	95
Administrative, legal and financial services (contracts, accounting, documentation, etc.)	40
Training, support and/or advice on publishing policies and best practice	115

Financial constraints are by far the most pressing challenge that affects three-quarters (149; 74.87%) of the respondents, while nearly half of them (90; 45.2%) are struggling with the lack of human resources. Infrastructure-related and administrative challenges affect more than 30% of the respondents.

Table 16. Challenges faced by Diamond OA journals

Challenges	# journals	%
Financial constraints	149	74.9%
Administrative constraints	64	32.2%
Lack of human resources	90	45.2%
Lack of expertise	51	25.6%
Technical limitations of existing infrastructure	66	33.2%
Providing adequate resources for the infrastructure and services	60	30.2%
Issuing persistent identifiers	35	17.6%
Trying to achieve and maintain interoperability with other services and systems	46	23.1%
Archiving, backing up or preserving content and software	48	24.1%

Note: The percentages in the table are calculated with respect to the total number of respondents. The sum of the numbers in the table is greater than 100% because the respondents could choose multiple options.

Free-text responses highlight additional challenges, such as recruiting reviewers and the slow pace of their work, low submission rates, registration in journal databases, marketing, geographic diversity of authors, but also the fact that African journals are expected to adopt ethical principles and guidelines coming from the West, though these are not necessarily relevant in the African context.

What kind of support would make Diamond OA journals more sustainable

Survey responses can be summarized as follows:

Human resources support

- Additional funding for permanent editorial and administrative staff, with skilled personnel.
- More human resources and administrative support (additional IT and administrative staff, editorial assistant/manager, etc.).
- Establishment of a dedicated secretariat to manage the journal.
- Regular funding to cover staff costs (at least annual, preferably long-term).
- Reduction of primary lecturing workloads and postgraduate supervision to ensure more journal management time.
- Encouragement and support for editors; ensuring that teams are available for all stages of the editorial process.
- Recruitment of committed editorial board members and peer reviewers, with remuneration.
- Expansion of the editorial board and recruitment of more experts as associate editors.
- Sponsorship or grants to recruit staff, with financial compensation for journal bodies; honoraria for editors and editorial staff.
- Financial support for production costs and incentives for journal staff: support for peer review process, journal management, administration, marketing and training.
- Funding for establishing international linkages with resource persons as reviewers.
- Institutional collaborations for financial support, human resources, and increased visibility.
- Need for financial support in the range of about \$30,000, with administrative, technical, and training support.
- Support for hosting, language editing, typesetting and administration.

Technical support and facilities, ensuring interoperability

- Office equipment
- Providing stable internet connectivity and constant access.
- Employing permanent technical staff.
- Financial support for production costs and meetings of the editorial team.
- Funding and technical support for developing a journal management system that can support editorial and publishing workflows, e.g. implementation and upgrading of the OJS platform.
- Support for hosting the journal online.
- Support for software adaptation and technical expertise in publishing and management.
- Technical support for indexing, metadata harvesting tools, and making the portal more discoverable.
- Funding for plagiarism tracking software (e.g. iThenticate subscription).
- Financial support for persistent identifiers like DOIs, including costs for member fees, content registration fees, and similarity checks.
- Funding for the long-term archiving/preservation services.
- Capacity building for editorial support on online publishing workflows.
- Financial support for operational costs, including language editing and editorial meetings.

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/challenges-funding-needs-and-support-required-make-diamond-oa>

Visibility and indexation

- Developing a communication strategy to promote the journal.
- Support for journals to get indexed in major databases (AJOL, DOAJ, Scopus, Web of Science).
- More acknowledgment from international organizations to have more visibility and more citations to compete with big publishers.
- Improved visibility of journals.
- Funding to cover the costs of advertising.

Advocacy for Diamond OA publishing support

- A better understanding on the part of institutional management of the publishing, complexities of managing a journal and an appreciation of the value of an accredited journal; continued institutional support for the public value of academic publishing and mainstream university funding for ongoing sustainability.
- Implementing mechanisms for individual or institutional donations, potentially through targeted campaigns or partnerships with organizations with similar goals.

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/challenges-funding-needs-and-support-required-make-diamond-oa>

Knowledge sharing and support

- Capacity building on the journal publishing process, legal administration processes, best practices to the journal staff and editorial teams.
- Ongoing training for editorial staff to stay current on best editorial practices, technological trends, and developments in the publishing field.
- Training workshops on best practices, OJS management, academic writing, peer review process, indexing process, and journal management.
- Emphasis on social responsibility initiatives such as promoting diversity and inclusion, educational programs, and making research more accessible to a broader audience.
- Exploring additional means of generating income, such as partnerships with businesses, philanthropic donations, or the creation of related services (workshops, training, etc.).
- Development of a business model and training or guidance to develop a business plan that will work under the constraints of a Diamond OA publishing model.
- Exploring new technologies, most of which are situated in Europe or the USA and are expensive for African journals. It would be good if those corporations could adapt their business models for the African market.
- Institutional support from research institutions or funding bodies using grants or subsidies to specifically support the publication of research in Global South OA journals.

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/challenges-funding-needs-and-support-required-make-diamond-oa>

Platform scope	# platforms²
Disciplinary	1
Institutional	15
National	4
Continental	3

Figure 13. The scope of the surveyed platforms

Platforms differ in size measured by the number of hosted journals (ten platforms host one to five journals; seven - 21–30 journals, one - 100–200 journals, while one hosts more than 500 journals)³ and the number of published articles (seven have up to 1,000 articles, six - 1,000–5,000, two - 5,000–10,000, two - 10,000–50,000, and two - 100,000–500,000 articles)⁴. While nine platforms host only Diamond OA journals, others also host journals that charge author fees. Altogether, the surveyed platforms host 302 Diamond OA journals.

The largest continental platform and the project partner AJOL currently has 130 Diamond OA journals and there were 4,088 articles added to those journals in 2023 (out of the total number of articles of 17,454 added to the platform last year).

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/platforms-scope-disciplines-and-inclusion-criteria>

Collaborations

Platforms are open to different types of collaborations. Training, production services and communication services are most frequently mentioned as areas of potential collaboration.

Table 24. Potential areas of collaboration

Collaboration areas	# platforms
Production services (copy-editing, proofreading, typesetting, metadata, etc.)	10
IT services (submission system, platform, website, etc.)	9
Communication services (marketing/dissemination, social media, etc.)	10
Administrative, legal and financial services (contracts, accounting, documentation, etc.)	4
Training, support and/or advice on publishing policies and best practice	11
None	2
Don't know	1

One respondent wrote that they “already collaborate in order to reduce and absorb costs of DOIs.

We are looking into XML.”

<https://eifl.net/programme/oa-publishing-africa/platforms-personnel-incentives-funding-institutional-support>

Here is the summary of the challenges mentioned in the survey responses:

- High cost and financial difficulties, inability to get constant support. No dedicated funding for the platform and dependence on institutional budgets.
- Unstable funding affects publishing operations, e.g. funding through three-year grants that are renewed. However, there is insecurity regarding their renewal in the future.
- Developing a strategic plan that will facilitate the consistent execution of the journal's editorial tasks, and to assure adherence to globally recognized quality standards in editorial work and publishing.
- The ability to maintain the Diamond OA model, as some African institutions insist on paying their peer reviewers a nominal fee and then want to recoup the money through APCs.
- The portal's financial sustainability could become a challenge if it is moved from the university to an external service that may charge hosting fees.
- Hosting costs for the platform are increasing annually, due to which platforms have to ensure that more journals are added or that the current journals are charged more for hosting.
- Different financial administration strategies in the participating institutional journals.
- Funding membership in COPE
- Funding the DOIs.
- Advertising opportunities were available in the past but this option is not available anymore.
- Funding for meetings is needed.
- In-house skills to manage the portal and to provide training and assistance to journal editorial teams to set-up their journal processes.
- Limited functionality of the platform, not as user friendly and intuitive as one would like.
- A low profile of the platform. More awareness should be created on the important role it plays in terms of e-workflow.

The following support will be appreciated:

- Centralizing and funding editorial processes to provide professional services to all journal editorial boards.
- Funding and collaboration in service provision and technical assistance.
- Raising awareness on Diamond OA publishing and providing guidelines on how individual OA journals can become financially independent from APCs.
- Financial and technical expertise.
- Funding for infrastructure, DOIs, editorial support staff and dedicated IT personnel.
- In Africa, it does seem that peer reviewers need to be paid a minimal fee. This fee should be allowed and funded centrally and streamlined. Indexing platforms should allow for this model, as it does not hinder the academic integrity of the journal.
- Templates for layout editing should be available to all journals, which will prevent the need to pay someone on an institutional level, at every institution.
- A similarity detection service should be available for all African journals, for free, as well as free DOIs.
- Increased visibility and access of our journals; support to get indexed in international databases.
- Help with metadata and content preservation.
- Training for editorial teams and portal staff.
- Toolkits to assist with advocacy.
- Getting political support and commitment on the national level
- Providing grants and technical partnership.
- National platforms like PKP OJS available to all universities, rather than individual instances at all the universities. Cost, funding, skills, and human resources could then be more streamlined.

GRANT CALL: SUPPORTING NO-FEE OPEN ACCESS PUBLISHING IN AFRICA

OPEN ACCESS PROGRAMME

OA AFRICA GRANT CALL

CELEBRATING THE 20TH
ANNIVERSARY

COORDINATORS

OPEN ACCESS POLICIES

THE CALL IS CLOSED.

EIFL, AJOL (African Journals Online) and WACREN (the West and Central African Research and Education Network) invite African organizations - legal entities that own open access (OA) journals that do not charge any fees for either authors or readers (often referred to as Diamond OA journals), and where editorial teams are based - to participate in this call for proposals, funded by Wellcome.

1. AIM OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

To enhance the quality and strengthen the sustainability of Diamond OA publishing in Africa.

Organizations can apply for support for a single Diamond OA journal or more than one Diamond OA journal they publish. We also invite applications from organizations hosting journal platforms that include Diamond OA journals.

<https://www.eifl.net/programme/open-access-programme/grant-call-supporting-no-fee-open-access-publishing-africa>

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22 July 2024

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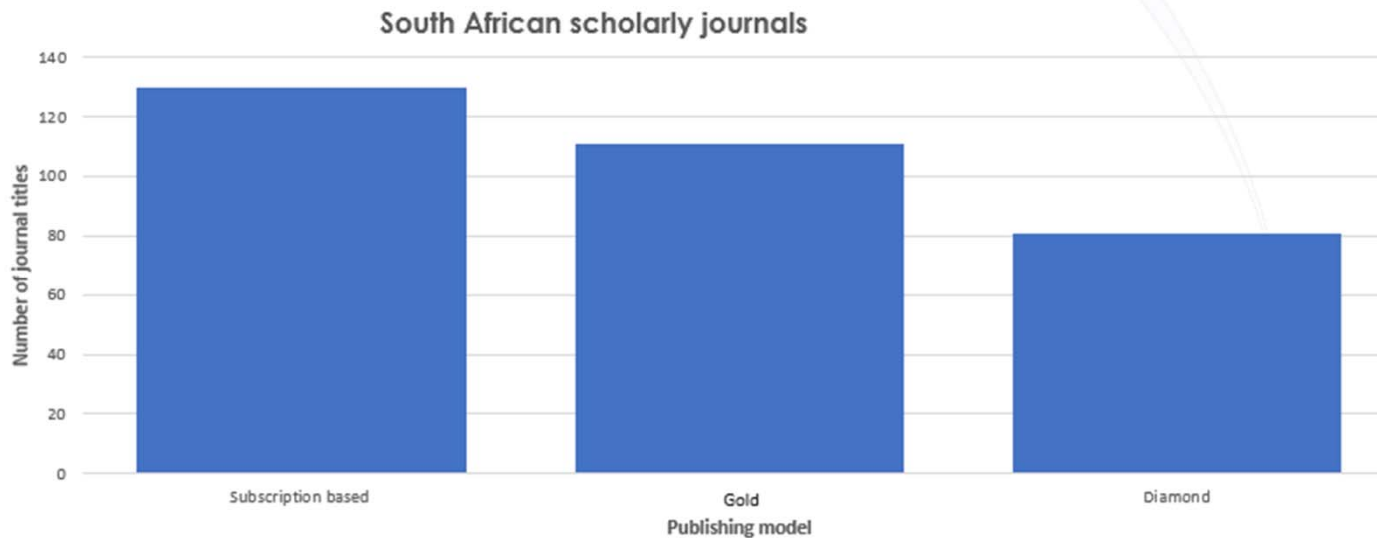
No-fee Open Access Publishing in South Africa

Ina Smith
Susan Veldsman

15 August 2024
AfricaArXiv Series

Publishing models applied by South African journals

South Africa publishes 322 (2023) accredited scholarly journals. Of the 322 journals 192 are open accessible, with 81 diamond open access journals and 111 gold open access. The remainder of the journals (130) are subscription-based journals.

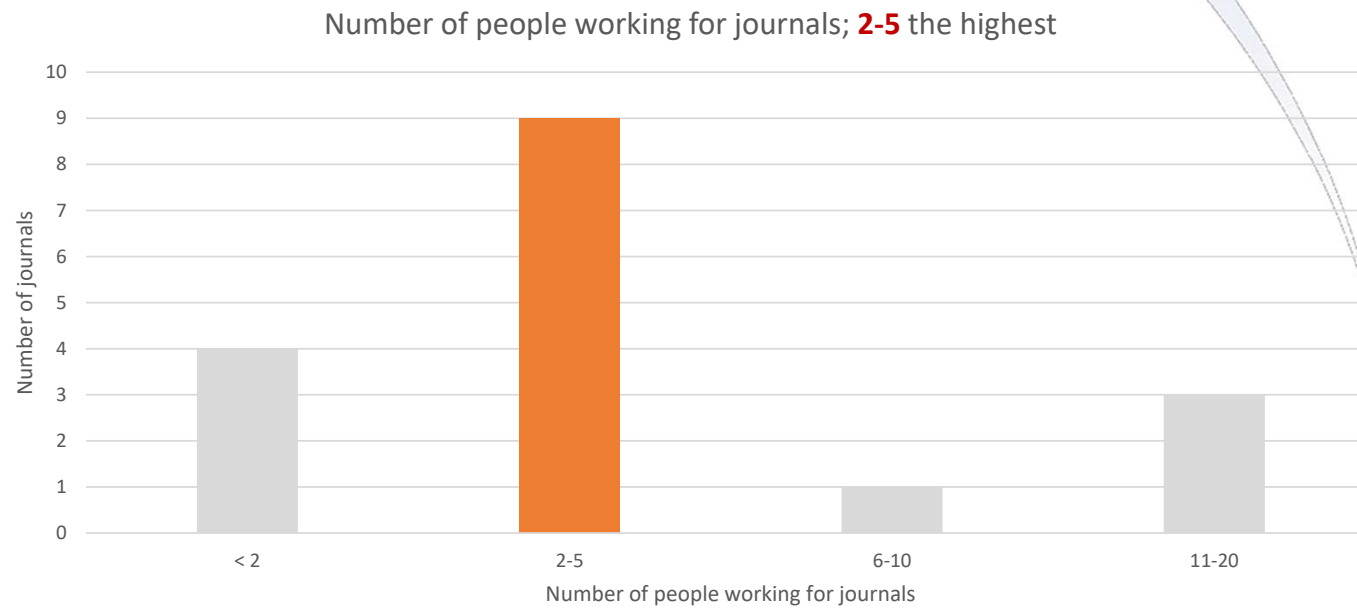


Journal survey responses from South Africa

South Africa	34	17.09%
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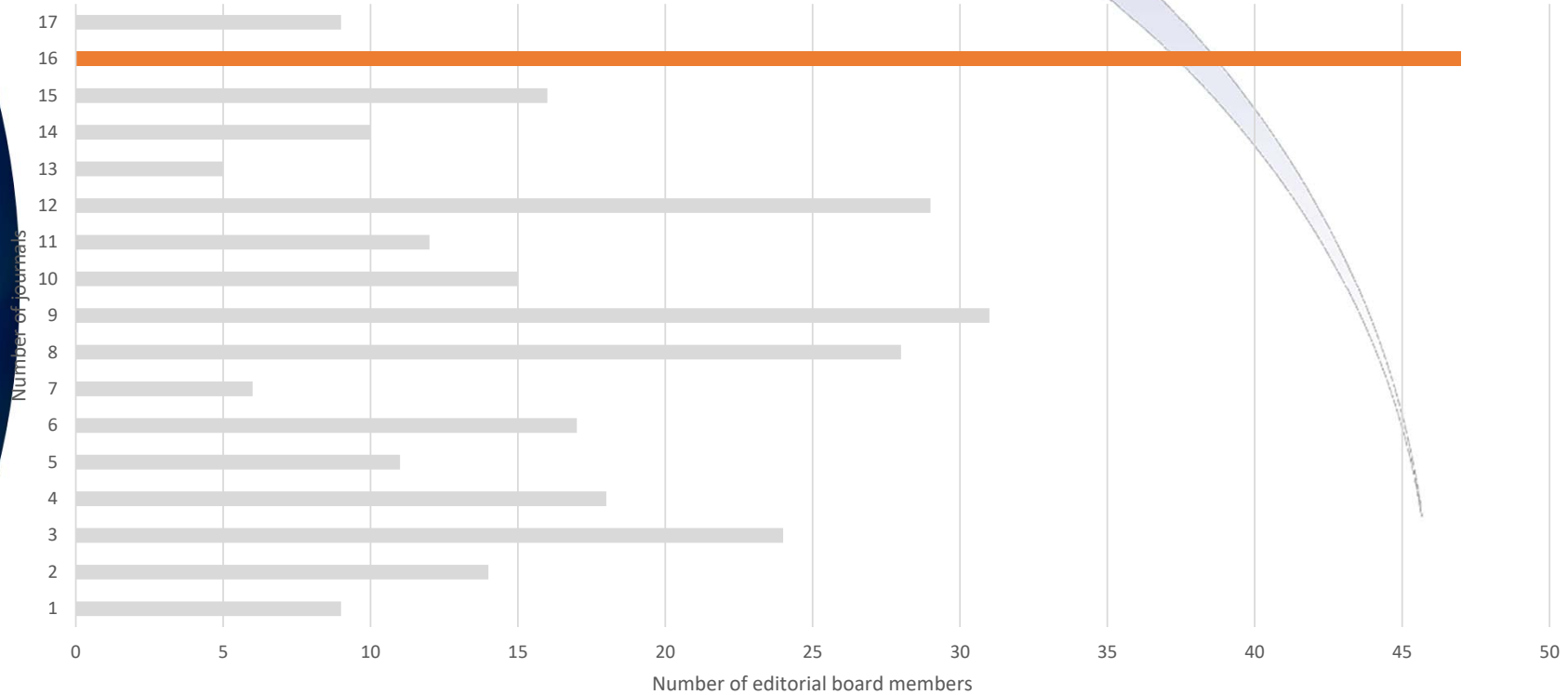
People working for journals

Includes key roles such as editors, assistant editors, and administrative support staff.



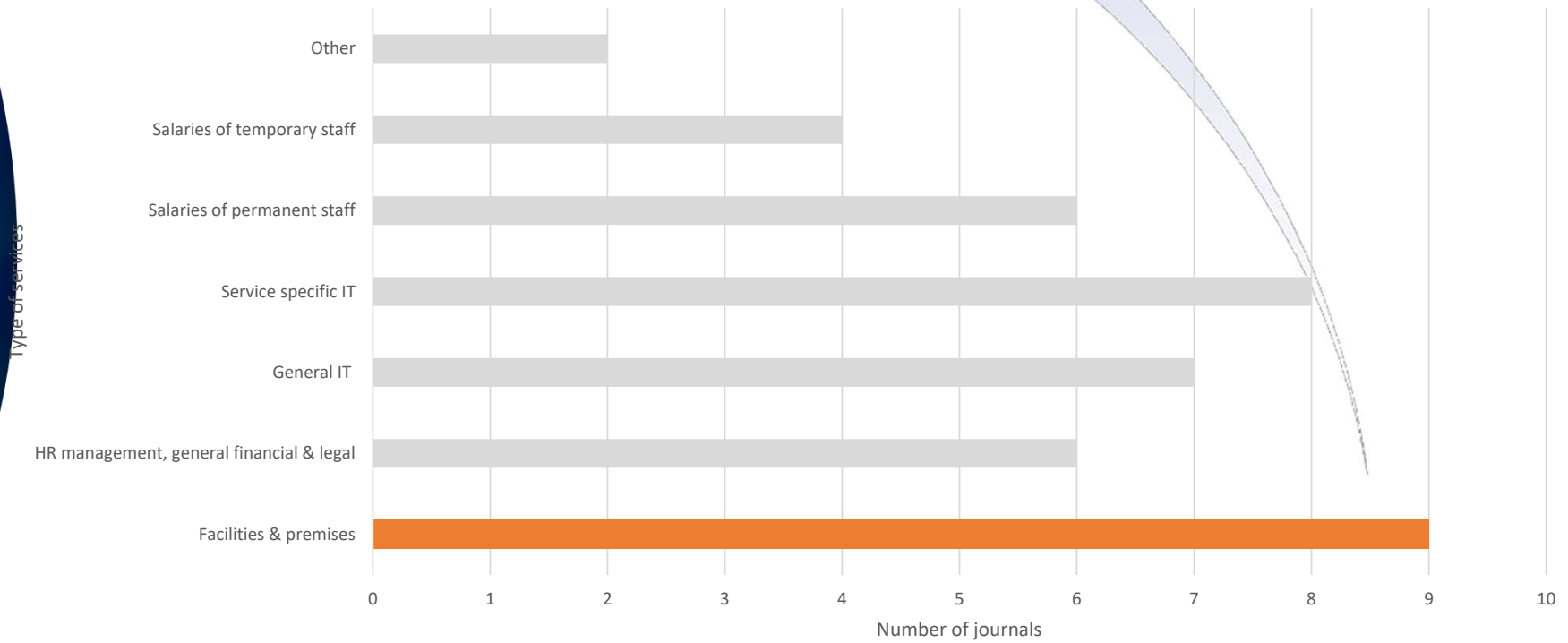
Number of editorial board members

Number of editorial board members per journal; **47** is highest



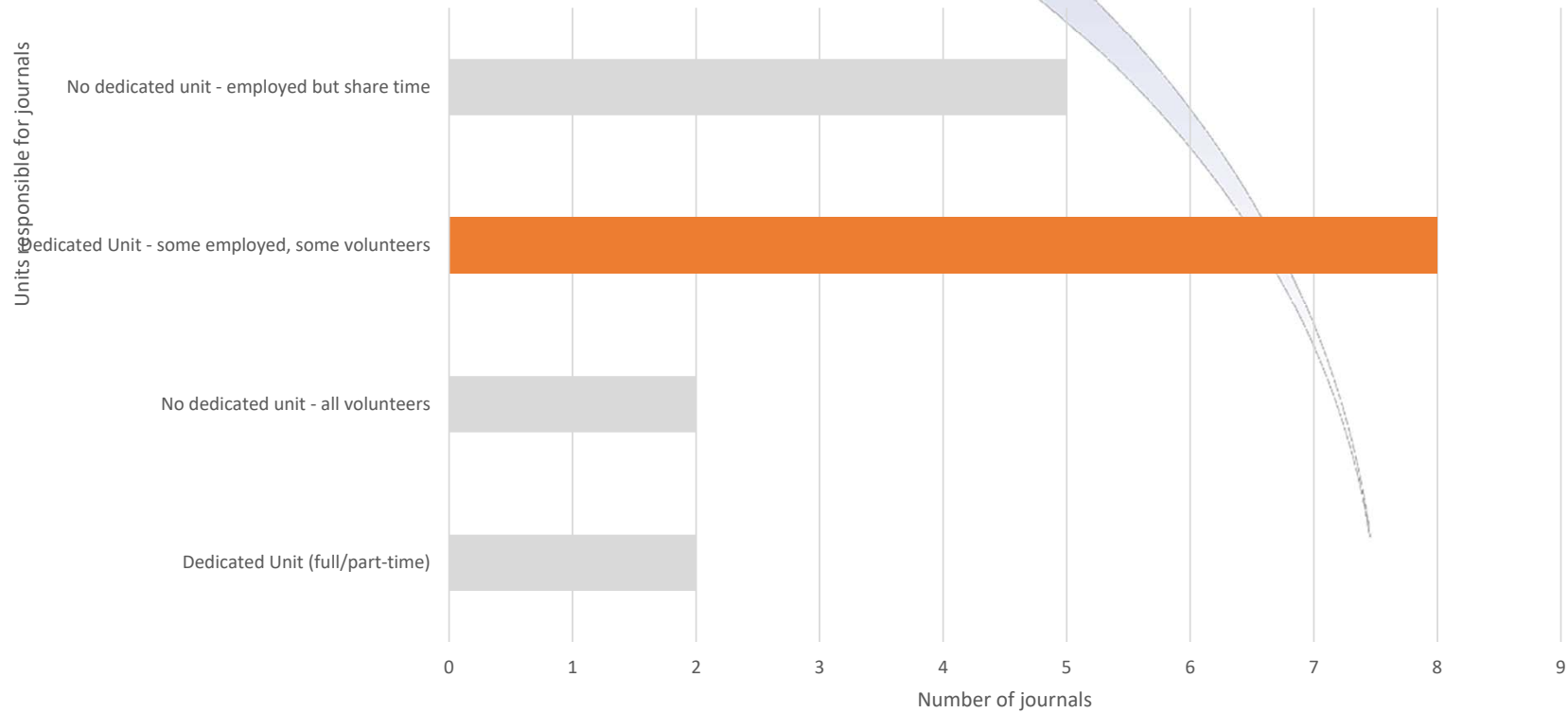
Institutional support

In-kind support provided by host organisation; **Facilities & premises** the highest



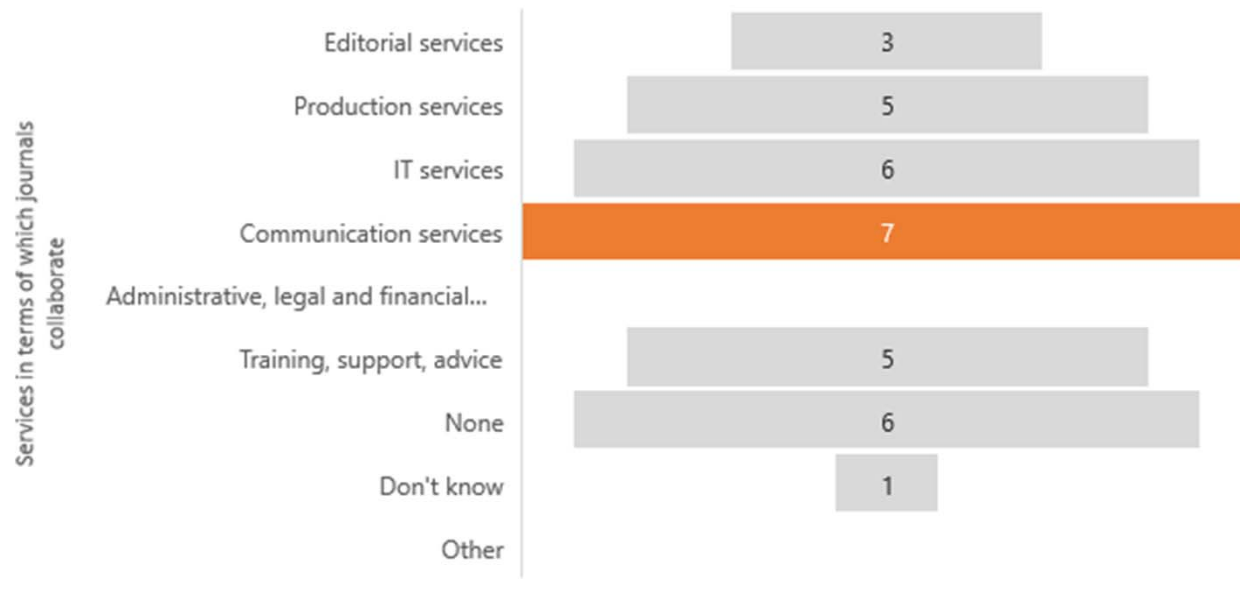
Units responsible for journals

Units responsible for journals; **Dedicated Unit - some employed, some volunteers** the highest



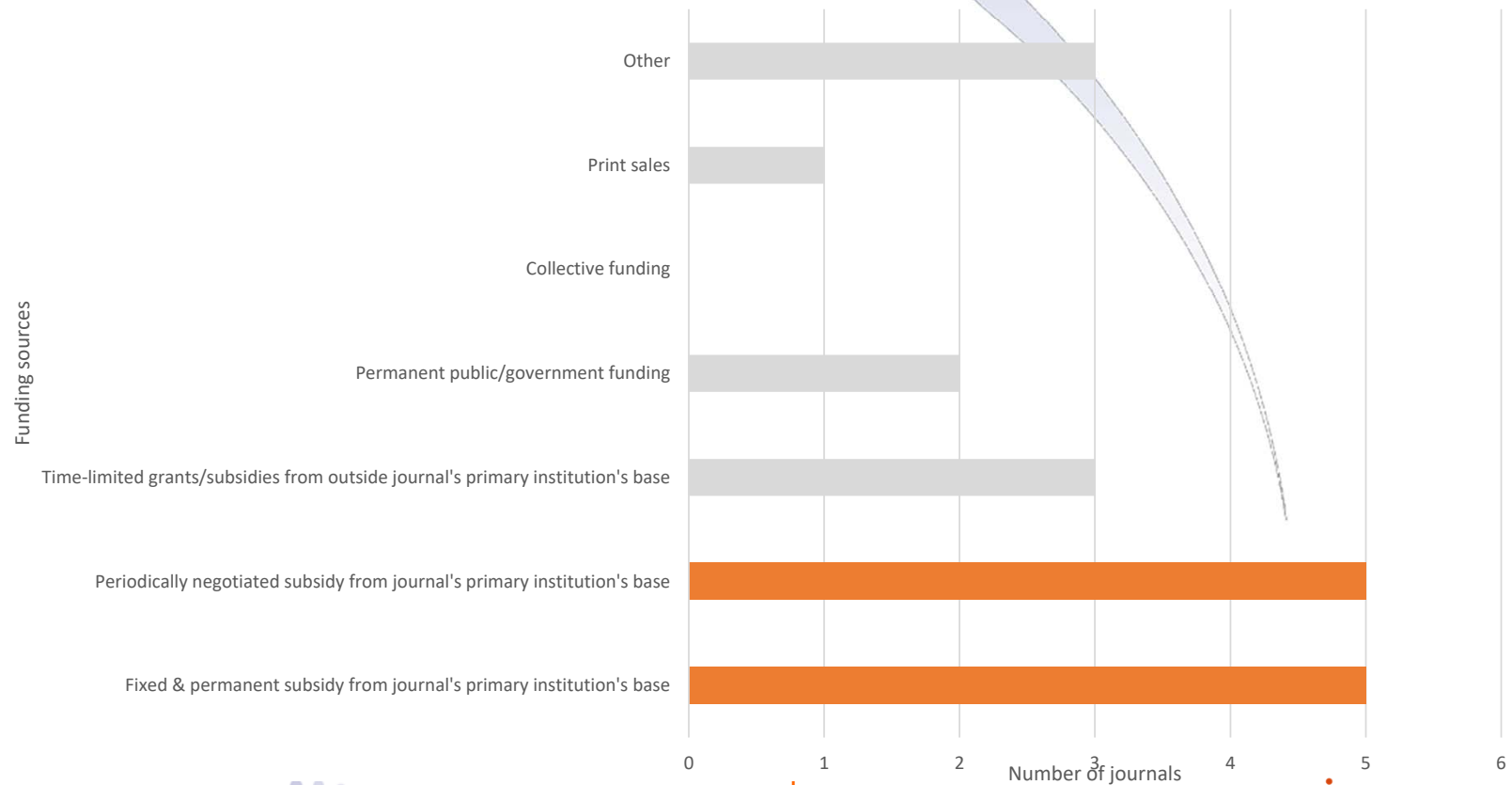
Collaboration amongst journals

Collaboration among journals in terms of services; **Communication services** the highest

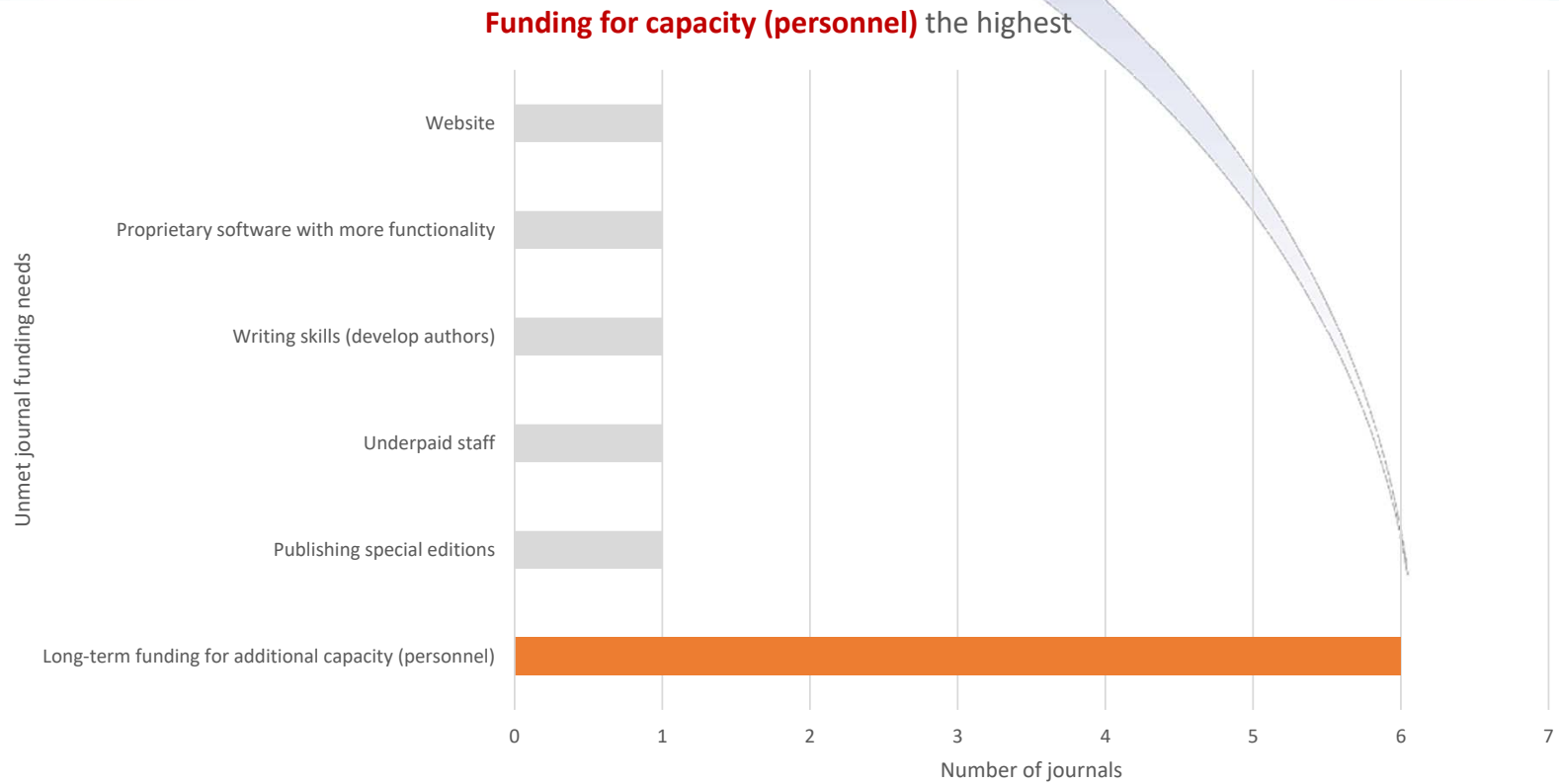


Funding and sustainability of journals

Periodically negotiated subsidy & Fixed & permanent subsidy from journal's primary institution's base the highest



Unmet funding needs



Journal technical infrastructure

IT support services fully outsourced (8 out of 17)

12 out of 17 use online workflows, with 5 partially using online workflows

- Most journals have editorial policy guidelines (15 out of 17)
- Double-blind peer review (14 of 17)

15 have implemented Crossref DOIs

15 embrace Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID)

- 15 use Public Knowledge Project (PKP) Open Journal Systems (OJS)



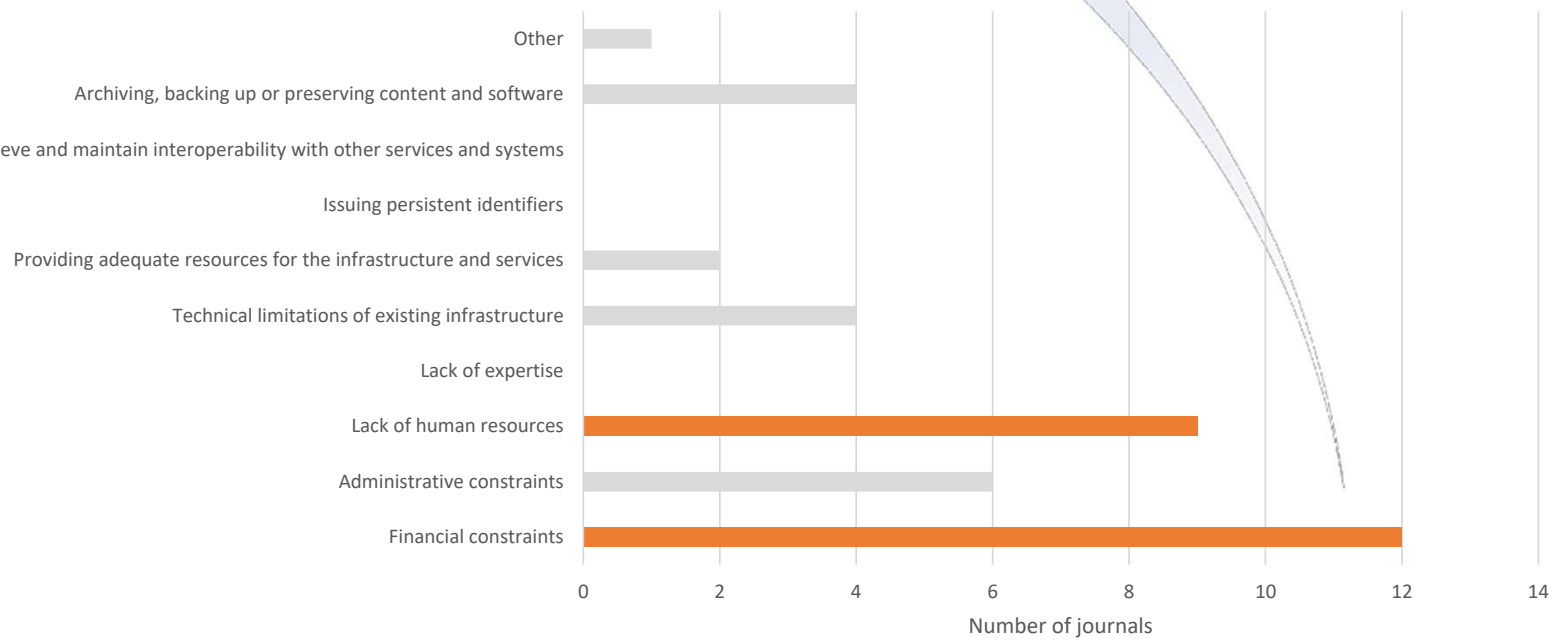
Connecting Research and Researchers



Overall challenges faced by journals

Overall challenges faced by journals; **Financial constraints** the highest

Overall challenges faced by journals



Needs and strategies to advance diamond OA

Dedicated, long-term financial support

Strategic allocation of dedicated resources (human capital) – need for additional time and freedom from undergraduate and postgraduate workload

Stay abreast of developments in scholarly publishing and adapt to changing environments

- Consider acknowledging work done by editors (and others)
- Journal sustainability plans for journals

Background to journal portals/platforms

When the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) was approached by EIFL for assistance in researching the diamond open-access publishing landscape in South Africa, it initially lacked comprehensive knowledge of the existing open-access portals in the country.

ASSAf conducted a thorough desktop study to identify such portals.

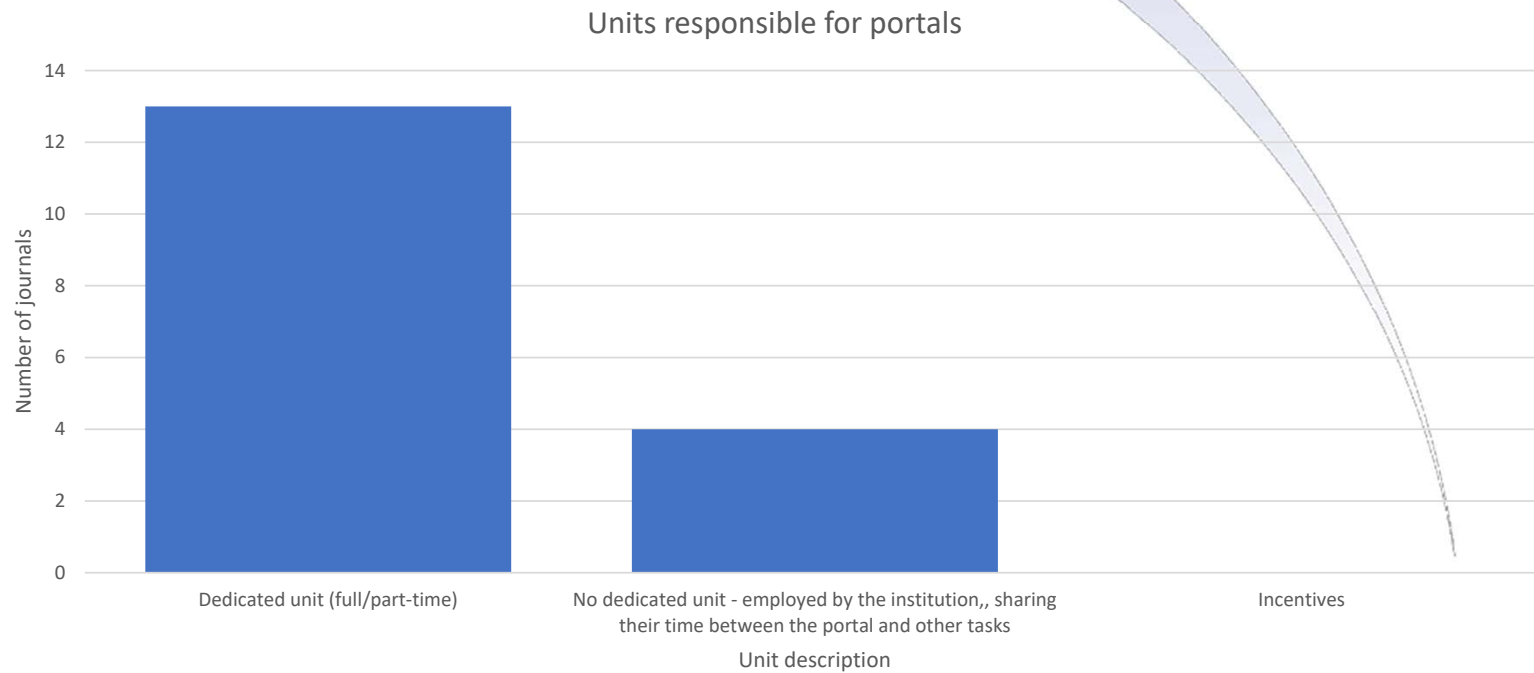
It identified 25 portals in South Africa hosting Open Access journals, although not exclusively limited to diamond Open Access journals.

The URLs of these portals along with their respective managers were pinpointed, and an EIFL project questionnaire was dispatched to the portal managers for completion.

17 out of 25 responded to survey

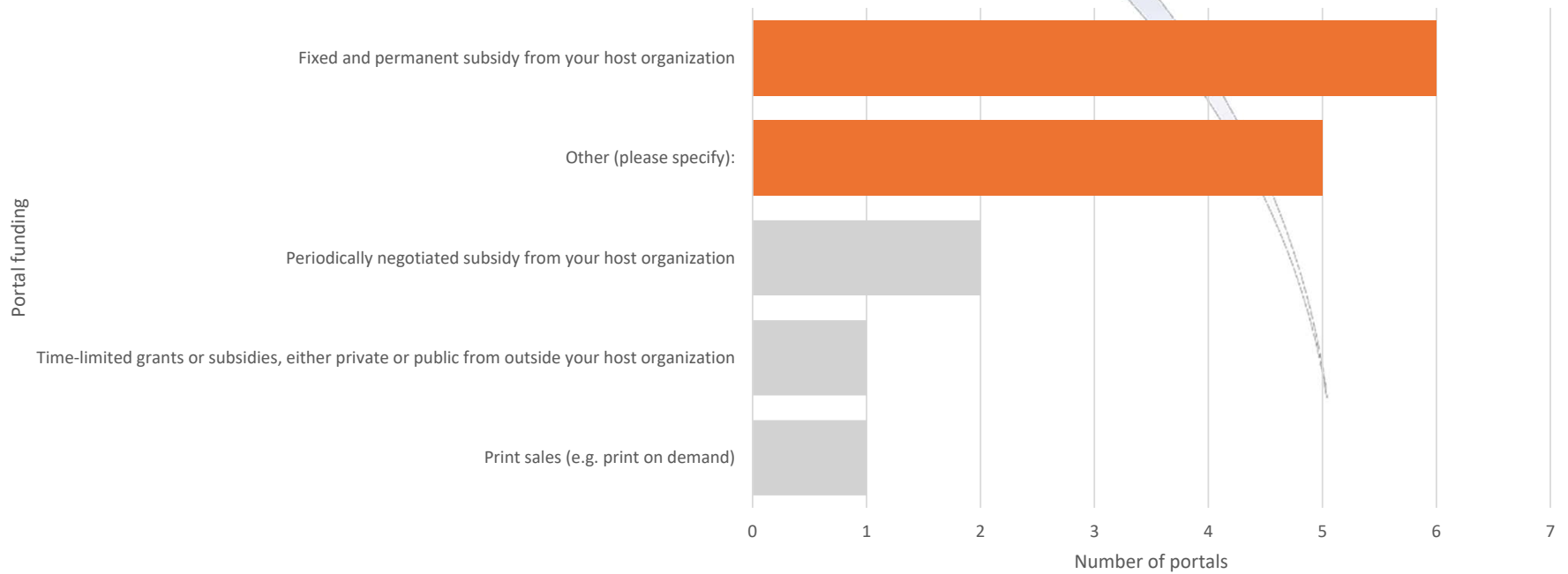
Portal name	Journals indexed
Sabinet African Journals	630
SciELO SA	111
Unisa Press Journals	31
SUNJournals	26
UJ Press Journals	17
Khulisa Journals	17
MedPharm Publications	13
UWC Scholar - Online Publishing Support Service	12
African Platform for Open Scholarship (APOS)	10
Kovisejournals	9
SAMA	8
UCT Open Access Journals	7
Open Journals	6
Rhodes Hosted Journals	5
PULP Pretoria University Law Press	4
CPUT Open Journal System	3
Durban University of Technology	1
Grand Total	923

Units responsible for portals/platforms



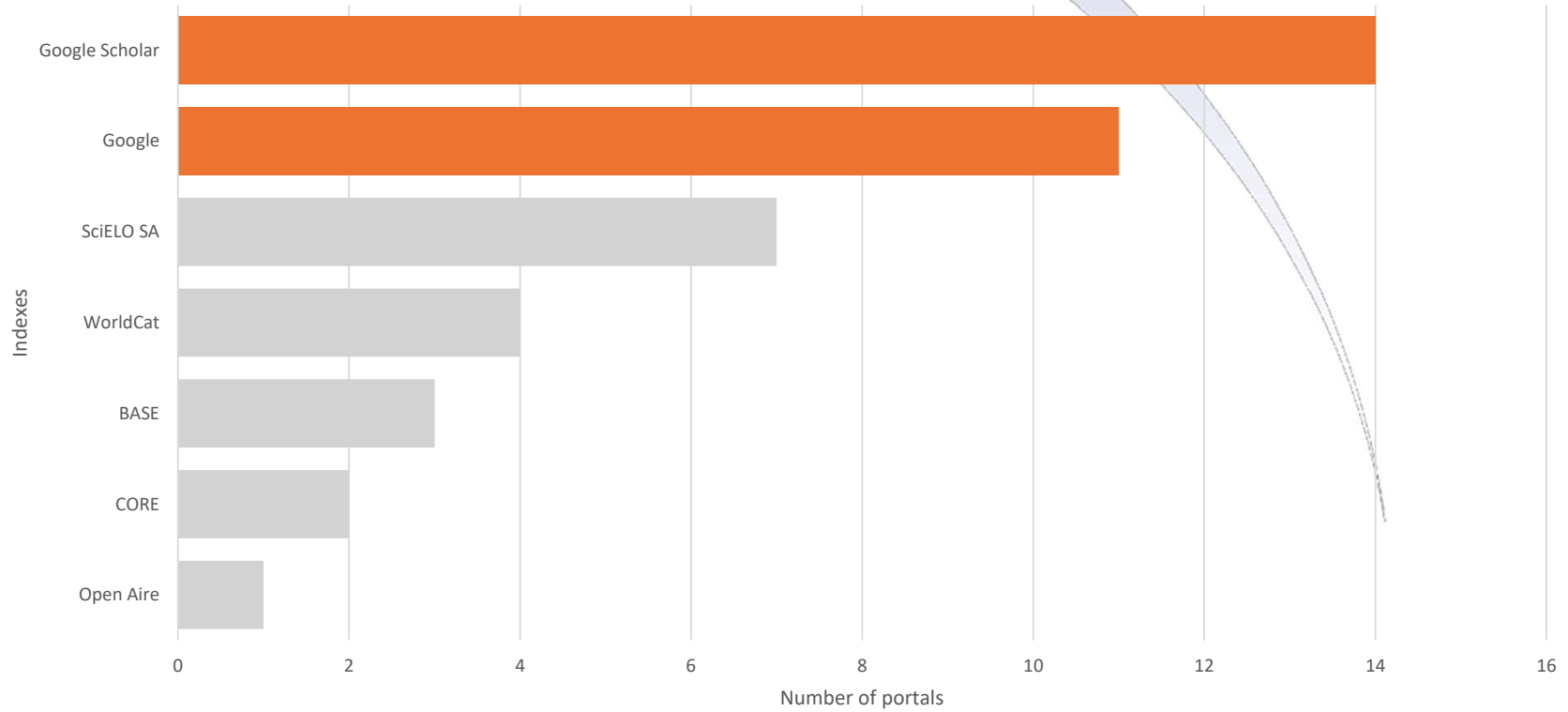
Funding of portals

Fixed and permanent subsidy from your host organization and Other (please specify): is noticeably higher than others



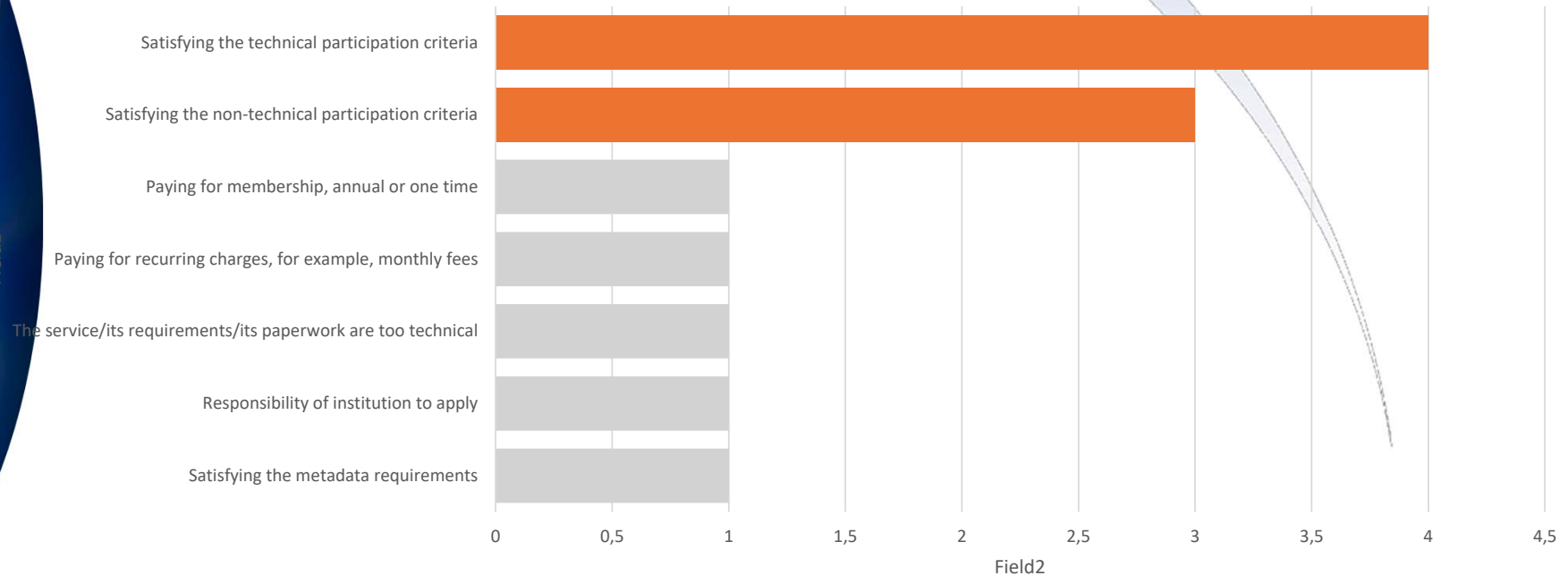
Indexing of portals

Google Scholar and Google noticeably higher



Challenges to get indexed

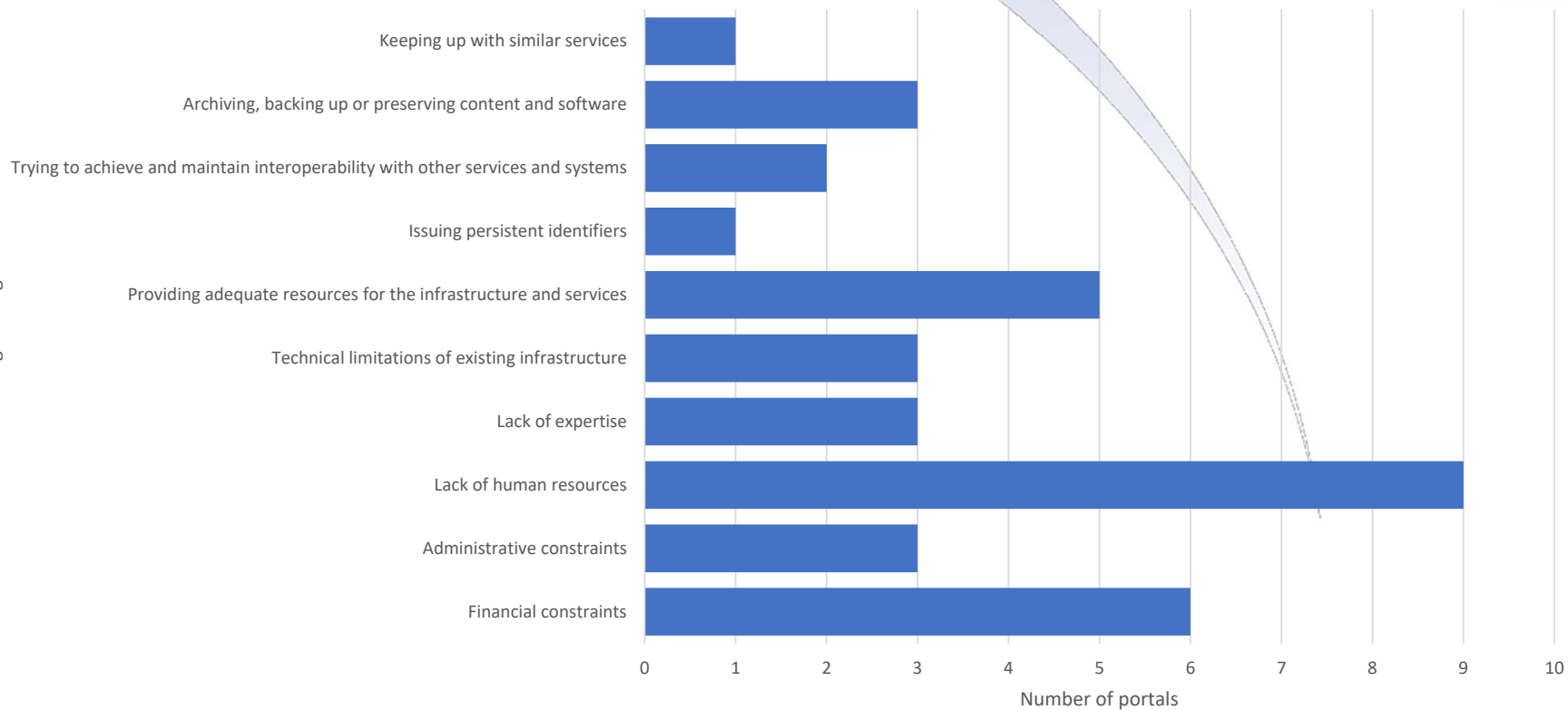
Satisfying the technical participation criteria and Satisfying the non-technical participation criteria have noticeably higher counts



Pressing challenges

Challenges being faced

Pressing challenges



Key challenges of diamond OA portals

- **Financial constraints**
- **Infrastructure and technical support:** lack of technical infrastructure and expertise; limited utilisation of OJS
- **Quality assurance:** maintaining high editorial services; rigorous peer review
- **Visibility and discoverability:** struggle to achieve sufficient visibility and discoverability
- **Capacity building:** support to new and emerging editors
- **Transitioning from subscription to OA models:** financial implications with careful planning
- **Advocacy and policy support:** advocacy and supportive policies on all levels are necessary; open access mandates and institutional repositories

Needs and strategies to advance diamond OA journals

- **Infrastructure:** search across all portals/platforms
- **Skilled human resources:** supporting editors
- **Long-term funding guarantees:** for sustainability, infrastructure development, etc
- **Compensation for peer-review:** fill need, streamline process, ensure consistency
- Provide **template** for layout editing for all journals to reduce publication fees
- **Free access** to similarity check, DOIs; **Centralised PKP OJS** for all SA journals
- Raising **awareness** about diamond OA
- **Political support** (policy) and commitment
- **Advocacy toolkits**
- **SciELO Africa** supported by PKP OJS



Thank you

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Diamond Open Access Publishing in Africa – Zimbabwe Report

Blessing Chiparausha

University Librarian

Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

Overview

- Seventeen meet diamond open OA publishing.
- Nearly all the journals identified are owned or managed by universities except a few.

Operational issues

Issue	Remarks
Software	OJS
Hosting services	Mainly cloud-based. Heavily dependent on AJOL, UCT's continental platform and isolated cases of local hosting.
Staffing	Volunteers – work done as part of their other duties.
Peer review	Mostly double blind.
PIDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All journals have ISSNs.• Only 4 assign DOIs.

Financial sustainability

- Journals heavily depend on volunteers.
- Work done is considered as community engagement.
- No clearly spelt out budgets.
- Research Council of Zimbabwe has, in the past, provided small grants.

Steps to increase uptake of diamond OA publishing

- Demystify misconceptions.
- Training and development.
- Have a global representation in editorial boards, peer reviewers and authors.
- Library and a publisher concept should be embraced.
- Engage regulatory authorities – ZIMCHE in case of Zimbabwe.

Immediate needs

- Training of editorial teams.
- Awareness – authors, readers, policymakers.
- Funding – especially for journals that are hosted locally.
- Benchmarking.

Thank you!