

# 2014 Summary Annual Report

*The Engine Room Foundation, org nr: 999 562 566*

<http://w2.brreg.no/enhet/sok/detalj.jsp?orgnr=999562566>

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## Summary

The engine room is a applied research and support organization dedicated to improving the safe and effective use of technology in advocacy. The engine room partners with activists and advocacy organizations to help them plan and implement activities that use technological tools. The engine room also conducts applied research on the same dynamics, to inform project design, support activities and funding decisions for social good and accountability programming.

In 2014, the engine room developed new partnerships and new projects, organized and facilitated a series of events, and actively participated in numerous workshops and conferences. We provided direct support to over 50 advocacy organizations; our team of 3 grew to 10; and all of our organizational growth and increase in direct support and research is thanks to the support of partners and funders. Our organization has also expanded significantly and adopted a number of policies and procedures, solidifying our organizational administration.

Further details on activities are available in an extended annual report available on <https://theengineroom.org/about>.

## Organizational Information

The engine room is registered as The Engine Room Foundation, a private foundation (stiftelse) registered in Norway in accordance with the national law on foundations (Stiftelsesloven). The engine room is a not-for-profit organization that supports human rights defenders and social justice activists that use technological tools and strategies in their work, by providing direct support, training, and applied research. Specific activities conducted in 2014 are described below.

The Engine Room Foundation has one employee, who is based in Oslo and functions as the foundation's general manager (daglig leder). The Foundation has a board of directors, and an

executive committee, which operate according to the organization's governance and financial policies, are available at <https://www.theengineerroom.org/wp-content/uploads/eRgfp14.pdf>.

In the course of 2014, The Engine Room Foundation took several measures to develop the organization and solidify governance procedures, including:

- added 7 team members on full time, freelance consultancy contracts
- added 3 directors to the board of directors
- refined governance and financial policies to adhere to Norwegian national law and international standards
- Contracted Norwegian bookkeepers to assist with financial management and Norwegian auditors to review and advise on operational procedures and policies
- established online accounting system for managing day-to-day financial administration

The Engine Room Foundation employs freelance consultants based in various countries to execute projects. We take regular measures to ensure a positive working environment, such as quarterly check-in meetings with all team members, online activities and annual in-person strategic retreats. The Foundation has experienced no accidents or injuries in 2014. The Foundation team is composed of 7 women and 4 men.

The Foundation's fiscal year is the calendar year, and in 2014, The Foundation had an operating budget of **NOK 3,239,880** closing the fiscal year with a balance of **NOK 741,181**.

## Activities

We substantially ramped up our program-related work in 2014. Our Responsible Data Program is focused on making it easier for advocacy organizations to use data responsibly. With this focus, we have developed and maintained healthy and collaborative partnerships to ensure that the program is relevant and effective for its target audience. In the course of 2014, The Engine Room Foundation has partnered with 16 partners, 7 of whom were active co-creators of the Responsible Data Forums and the wider responsible data movement. Through the course of the year we held 6 Responsible Data Forums.

Our Matchbox Project is built to match high impact advocacy projects with the network of technical and strategic expertise they need to effectively use technology that powers their work. In 2014, we over 30 organizations with light-touch strategic advice, and 5 partners within-depth technical and strategic support in concentrated periods (from 3 to 9 months). All 5 of these partnerships will continue into 2015. One example is ¿Quién Compró? (Mexico), an online platform investigating how the Mexican congress spends public funds. The site shows where and on what public money is being spent. We are facilitating improvements to the website to allow for more effective collection, uploading and downloading of receipts obtained through freedom of information laws.

In the course of 2014 we have developed a set of core services that we can provide to organizations looking for support to integrate technology into their work. We do so on a pro

bono basis and on a consultancy basis. Clients of our consultancy-driven support are primarily Western organizations with accessible budgets. Developing the base of partners that can afford our services has also dramatically increased our financial resilience and has supplemented our core funding. We provide pro bono support when partners do not have budgets available and when we believe that our support can significantly strengthen their activities and efficiency. Most organizations that receive pro bono support are smaller organizations working in the global South.

Examples of funded direct support relationships in 2014 include the following:

The engine room team has been working with [Amnesty International](#) for two years on a variety of projects involving a mix of pro bono and consultancy work. In 2014, we worked with Amnesty to design and develop the training materials associated with their new Panic Button app. We also supported them through a redesign process of their internal information management for their global Individuals at Risk database.

We supported [Asylos](#) to develop its new data-sharing tool for the decentralized research team that powers its support to refugees. We will continue working with Asylos to develop Kollekt.io to be used by larger networks of researchers.

Pro bono support that has been funded by this project-based partner support has included:

- Monitoring and evaluation support for Harassmap in Egypt
- Brokering security auditing for the Zimbabwe Peace Project
- Researching technology options for mailing lists for Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
- Supporting Pawa254 to address responsible data challenges in land data aggregation in Kenya
- Working with Research and Advocacy Unit of Zimbabwe to visualize data for reports on parliamentary performance
- Light-touch strategic support in response to requests from 40 organizations ranging from questions about designing pilots using SMS feedback mechanisms, facilitating audience research and design of wireframes to inform future web development

Another important part of our partner support is designing and leading events that support our partners' networks, programs, and capacity development. This work is also in line with one of our core mandates to support collaboration and facilitate connections in different areas of expertise. In 2014, we organized and facilitated many events for close partners to further that work, and played a supportive role in many others, such as the [School of Data's Summer Camp](#) which brought together 50 fellows, local initiatives and OK's School of Data team for a two-day camp to share skills, organize the SCODA network, and plan for their future work.

## Research Partnerships

[European Capability for Situational Awareness \(ECSA\)](#) – The engine room is providing strategic and technical support to the international consortium (led by [Free Press Unlimited](#)

and [iilab](#)) contracted by the European Commission to produce a feasibility study for the development of an international monitoring platform for digital rights and violations of the freedom of expression online.

[Peace Research Institute Oslo](#) (PRIO)- The engine room is collaborating with PRIO on a research [project](#) on communicating risk in the digital age, and is responsible for producing an article on responsible data challenges posed by the use of digital communications tools in emergencies. PRIO is an independent peace studies institution that is researching the conditions for peaceful relations between nations, groups and individuals.

[Making all Voices Count](#) ([MAVC](#)) – Making All Voices Count has supported a 2-year research project to explore the factors that influence tool selection processes among voice and accountability initiatives in three African countries. The project is coordinated by The Engine Room Foundation and implemented by [Accountability Lab](#) in Liberia, [Network Society](#) (University of Witwatersrand) in South Africa, and [Pawa254](#) in Kenya.

[The Transparency and Accountability Initiative](#) (T/AI) contracted The Engine Room Foundation to conduct qualitative research on the roles, activities and self-conceptions of social movements in the tech, transparency and accountability field, to understand how, when and how their work for social good can best be supported by the international support and funding communities. This research work is in full swing and will be continuing into 2015.

## Participation in Events

In addition to the events we led or helped to organize, The Engine Room Foundation participated in the 20 international events in 2014, where we worked actively to build our networks, provide support to participants and advocate for data driven, save and effective approaches to the use of technology in advocacy.

## **Funders**

[Hivos](#) – Hivos has supported the engine room’s responsible data work, specifically including participation costs for the [Responsible Data Forum in Budapest](#), and for the development of a Responsible Data Toolkit. Hivos is an international development organization that develops programs, engages in policy advocacy and researches a variety of topics.

[William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) – The Hewlett Foundation is providing The Engine Room Foundation with funding for the Matchbox Project to test our support methodology with local organizations in Southern Africa and Latin America working to promote transparency and accountability.

[Oak Foundation](#) – Oak Foundation provides The Engine Room Foundation with general support to allow for more responsive support and research for in-country advocacy projects.

[Open Society Foundation](#) – OSF’s Information Program is supporting the Responsible Data Forum, a series of collaborative events being convened in the first half of 2014. The Forum is an effort to develop useful tools and strategies for dealing with the ethical, security and privacy challenges facing data-driven advocacy.