



WAPOR Global Policy Forum

July 02, 2024

Summary

1. Opening and welcome

Robert Chung (RC), WAPOR President, welcomed participants to the Open Policy Forum, explaining that it is a new format intended to replace one of the regular council meetings. The forum aims to facilitate a more casual yet substantive discussion among family members, committee members, and chapter leaders. The decision to transition from frequent council meetings to this forum arose from a desire to lighten the meeting schedule while still ensuring meaningful engagement.

RC noted that the forum was opened to a broader audience for more inclusive participation. The structure of the forum is less formal, with no official minutes, encouraging a relaxed yet focused discussion. This meeting serves as a precursor to the upcoming annual conference in Seoul, where formal networking and decision-making will take place.

The main portion of the meeting is divided into three sections, each addressing key issues identified from a recent agenda survey:

1. The first section will discuss the priorities for WAPOR's macroscopic development for approximately 30 minutes.
2. The second section will focus on membership development, specifically on whether and how to increase membership, for another 30 minutes.
3. The third section will explore ways to improve collaboration with chapters, with a 30-minute discussion.

The final 30 minutes are reserved for general discussions on additional proposals, including a rotational agenda survey proposed by Pablo Paras and a transparency initiative suggested by Gary Langer.

RC emphasized the flexibility of the forum, encouraging participants to contribute freely throughout the meeting.

2. WAPOR Membership Survey 2023

Kseniya Kizilova (KK), WAPOR Executive Director, presented the findings of the 2023 membership survey, which was conducted from November 2023 to January 2024. KK noted that the survey included many open-ended questions, allowing members to share detailed feedback and suggestions.

KK highlighted the positive trend in membership growth, with WAPOR reaching its highest number of members since 2006 by the end of the previous year. Despite this growth, there has been a noticeable decline in satisfaction levels among members. While over 80% of members were previously satisfied, this number has dropped to around 60%. KK pointed out that new members, especially those from academia and those who joined solely for the conference, reported lower satisfaction levels.

The survey identified three key factors that members value most about their membership: the quality of research presented at the annual conference, the range of topics covered, and professional networking opportunities. KK mentioned that the high acceptance rate of conference papers (about 95-96%) contributes to varying quality, which has been a

point of concern for some members. Additionally, the busy conference schedule with short breaks limits networking opportunities.

KK emphasized that the annual conference is crucial for WAPOR, not only for attracting new members but also for enhancing current members' experiences. Members feel well-informed about WAPOR activities, with the president's letter being the most frequently read source of information. KK suggested maintaining the monthly frequency of the president's letter due to its popularity.

Regarding other activities, over 90% of members are satisfied with WAPOR webinars, and the conference experience from the previous year received positive feedback, especially for the quality of presentations and keynote lectures. However, there were some complaints about the cost of registration and the quality of the poster sessions.

Looking ahead, members expressed a desire for more networking opportunities, possibly through mixed-mode conferences or streaming some panels for those unable to attend in person. They also requested more training workshops with advanced topics. KK concluded by stressing the importance of addressing these issues to improve overall member satisfaction and engagement.

Discussion

Following the presentation on the 2023 membership survey findings, the discussion centered around understanding the mixed trends of declining satisfaction among new members and the overall increase in membership.

RC initiated the conversation by highlighting the dual trends: declining satisfaction levels despite a record high in membership numbers. This paradox prompts the need to delve deeper into understanding the expectations and experiences of new members.

Tim Johnson (TJ) suggested addressing the demand for more workshops, particularly advanced training sessions, by introducing post-conference workshops in addition to pre-conference ones. This approach could cater to both introductory and advanced learning needs, enhancing the overall conference experience.

David Jodice (DJ) then commented on the survey results, noting that longer-term members tend to have higher satisfaction levels. DJ observed that new members might have different expectations and might not yet be fully integrated into the WAPOR community. DJ emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing the concerns of new members to improve retention and satisfaction.

Further discussions touched on the logistical challenges posed by travel costs, particularly for members from different geographical regions. The idea of holding semi-annual conferences and leveraging hybrid models for broader participation was floated. Patrick Moynihan (PM) suggested this could help maintain engagement and accommodate the diverse membership base.

The conversation also revisited the importance of face-to-face interactions, acknowledging that while online platforms have expanded reach, in-person meetings remain crucial for networking and community building. There was a consensus on the need to balance virtual and physical events to maximize member engagement.

As the discussion concluded, there was a clear emphasis on enhancing the conference structure, exploring regional and post-conference workshops, and continuing to adapt to the evolving needs of a geographically dispersed membership. The group recognized the need for ongoing efforts to understand and address member satisfaction to ensure continued growth and engagement in WAPOR activities.

3. What should be the priorities for WAPOR's development in 2025-2030?

Prior to the Forum, WAPOR members and councilors were invited to share their views by completing a short survey. RC asked KK to present the main findings, as summarized below.

WAPOR members have highlighted the need for innovation, community building, global standards, local and global presence, membership growth, methodology reliability, education, and improved communication. However, specific strategies and action plans for implementing these priorities need further development, alongside attention to training, funding, impact assessment, and diversity.

Global Standards and Ethical Promotion. Promoting WAPOR's standards as the global benchmark for opinion research shall remain a key priority. Upholding high professional and ethical standards is seen as essential for the credibility and reputation of WAPOR. Keeping guidelines current with technological advancements and aligning efforts across regions are seen as necessary for coherent progress.

Community and Networking. Developing a robust community beyond annual conferences and enhancing networking opportunities were frequently mentioned. Members value continuous engagement and support throughout the year, suggesting a need for more frequent and diverse networking events. Specific strategies for fostering this community could include online platforms or regional meet-ups.

Local and Global Presence. Supporting local representatives and regional chapters to enhance both local and global engagement has been highlighted. Members recognize the importance of being both locally grounded and globally connected, suggesting a dual approach to WAPOR's presence. The balance between local initiatives and global strategy needs clear planning and resources to avoid fragmentation of efforts.

Membership Growth. Increasing membership, particularly from the commercial sector, has been identified as one of the priorities. There is a desire to broaden WAPOR's influence and ensure that its work is accurately reported by the media. Strategies for attracting commercial (and other) sector members need development.

Innovation and Technology Integration. There is a strong recognition that the landscape of survey research is rapidly changing, and staying at the forefront of these changes is crucial for maintaining relevance and accuracy in public opinion research. Members emphasized the importance of adopting new tools and techniques in survey research, especially integrating AI and new technologies.

Methodology Reliability and Data Quality. Ensuring the reliability and quality of research methods, especially with the shift to online surveys, has been stressed. Maintaining high standards of data quality is critical as methodologies evolve. There is a need for detailed guidelines and best practices for new methodologies to maintain consistency.

Education and Training. Providing education on how to use new tools and AI effectively, and educating journalists about responsible polling practices has been mentioned. Equipping members with the skills to utilize new technologies and ensuring accurate reporting of opinion research are vital for WAPOR's mission. Comprehensive training programs and educational initiatives need to be developed and implemented.

Communication and Outreach. Improving webinars and increasing press and communication efforts to journalists and stakeholders have been suggested as a means to promote WAPOR and help it grow. Effective communication and outreach are vital for

expanding WAPOR's influence and visibility. Specific activities might include leveraging social media and digital marketing to reach broader audiences.

Discussion

Following the presentation, participants engaged in a dynamic exchange, highlighting several key themes.

Membership Growth and Engagement: Participants acknowledged the importance of increasing membership and enhancing engagement among existing members. There was a consensus that leveraging new technologies, particularly AI, could play a pivotal role in outreach efforts and in conducting more sophisticated research. The focus was not just on attracting new members but also on retaining them by offering value through specialized resources, networking opportunities, and educational initiatives.

Collaboration with International Organizations: Historical ties between WAPOR and organizations like the UN and UNESCO were revisited as potential avenues for rekindling partnerships. Speakers emphasized the strategic value of aligning with global entities to amplify WAPOR's voice in shaping public opinion research agendas worldwide. Suggestions included identifying members with existing ties to these organizations to facilitate deeper connections and exploring joint initiatives focused on areas such as sustainable development goals and combating misinformation.

Partnerships and Outreach Strategies: There was a nuanced discussion around the distinction between formal membership and strategic partnerships with international bodies. Participants favoured a proactive approach where WAPOR could act as a broker, connecting its members' expertise with opportunities from larger organizations like the UNDP. Proposals included establishing a centralized database of members' expertise to streamline collaboration efforts and enhance visibility within global decision-making circles.

Support for Regional Chapters and Collaboration: The importance of strengthening regional chapters and fostering collaboration among them was underscored. Participants emphasized the need for tailored support mechanisms to empower local initiatives while maintaining cohesion within the global WAPOR framework. Ideas included enhancing communication channels and organizing joint events to promote knowledge sharing and best practices among regional chapters.

Technological Integration and Methodological Advancements: Discussions on technological integration focused on leveraging AI and other innovations to advance methodologies in public opinion research. There was recognition of the challenge of balancing traditional methodological rigor with the opportunities presented by new technologies. Participants highlighted the importance of exploring how AI could augment rather than replace existing methodologies, ensuring robust and reliable insights into public opinion trends.

Practical Considerations and Next Steps: The conversation delved into practical considerations such as the costs and benefits associated with partnerships and memberships. Participants emphasized the need for clear objectives and mutual benefits in any collaborative endeavour to ensure sustainable relationships and meaningful contributions from both parties. Strategies for promoting WAPOR's unique value proposition, such as showcasing members' expertise and facilitating cross-sector partnerships, were also discussed as essential steps in positioning the organization as a key player in global public opinion research initiatives.

In summary, the discussion was characterized by a forward-thinking approach to expanding membership, strengthening global partnerships, and embracing technological advancements while maintaining methodological integrity. The emphasis on strategic alliances, regional collaboration, and proactive engagement underscored WAPOR's commitment to advancing the field of public opinion research on a global scale.

4. How can WAPOR increase our membership?

Prior to the Forum, WAPOR members and councilors were invited to share their views by completing a short survey. RC asked KK to present the main findings, as summarized below.

WAPOR members have highlighted various strategies for increasing membership, including training programs, direct outreach, visibility campaigns, demonstrating value, local and global relevance, engaging younger scholars and professionals, targeted awareness strategies, university engagement, public appearances, and addressing membership costs through sponsorships. However, specific action plans, impact assessment, long-term engagement, diversity, and resource allocation need further development.

Demonstrating Value. Demonstrating the value of membership to potential members and clear communication of the benefits of WAPOR membership is essential for attracting new members. Specific benefits and success stories that highlight the value of membership need to be articulated.

Direct Outreach. Direct outreach to survey research firms and academics (universities), especially in regions with low membership have been proposed. Universities are fertile ground for recruiting future members who are already interested in survey research. Proactive recruitment efforts targeted at underrepresented regions and groups can broaden WAPOR's reach.

Outreach to Younger Scholars and Industry Professionals. Developing strategies to encourage junior scholars and industry professionals to join, while considering their perspectives on opinion polling, is important. Engaging younger and industry professionals can inject fresh ideas and expand WAPOR's base.

Visibility and Recruitment Campaigns. Increasing visibility through social media, advertisement strategies, and recruitment campaigns that incentivize current members to bring new members can be helpful. Enhanced visibility and strategic recruitment can raise awareness and demonstrate the value of WAPOR membership.

Regional and Global Relevance. Engaging in activities that make WAPOR relevant regionally and globally, including using AI to provide real-time insights, is important. Being at the forefront of innovative research and showing practical relevance can attract members. Specific initiatives and examples of AI usage are needed to illustrate this approach.

Training, Workshops, and Events. Members suggest frequent training and workshop programs (both in-person and online), and increased participation of central board members in chapter events. Regular educational and engagement opportunities are seen as crucial for attracting new members. Local activities can also help build a stronger community and attract new members. The specific content and target audience for these training programs need further clarification.

Awareness and Targeted Strategies. Increasing awareness among relevant audiences with targeted strategies, being present at industry-related events, and enhancing local

activities through representatives is important. A tailored approach to different target groups and active local presence can enhance membership.

Public Appearances and Publications. Increasing public appearances, publishing polls, and conducting annual surveys on global matters is important. High visibility and authoritative publications can boost WAPOR's credibility and attractiveness. Regularity and platforms for these appearances and publications need to be established.

Membership Pricing and Sponsorship. Addressing high membership costs through corporate sponsorships and offering discounted rates for the first year were proposed. Making membership more affordable can lower the barrier to entry and attract more members. Identifying potential sponsors and negotiating sponsorship deals require focused efforts.

5. How can WAPOR support better the Regional Chapters?

WAPOR members have suggested various strategies for better supporting regional chapters, like inclusion in central committees, promoting achievements, active participation, providing resources, local sponsorship, routine meetings, setting a common agenda, ensuring strong leadership, addressing European legislative issues, and protecting democratic values. However, detailed action plans, impact assessment, diversity and inclusion, long-term strategies, and resource allocation need further development.

Inclusion in Central Committees. Regional chapter leaders, such as Presidents and Vice Presidents, should have automatic inclusion as observers (without voting right) in WAPOR's central committees. Active inclusion of chapter board members in various functional committees was also suggested. This inclusion would ensure that regional chapters have a direct voice and representation in WAPOR's central decision-making processes.

Promotion and Communication. WAPOR should actively promote the achievements of regional chapters to encourage more active communication. Highlighting regional successes can foster a sense of pride and motivation among chapters, leading to increased engagement.

Active Participation and Attendance. Central WAPOR members should actively participate in and attend regional chapter events. Regular involvement from central members can strengthen ties and show support for regional activities.

Local Sponsorship and Events. Encouraging local sponsorships and hosting events to support regional chapters can be helpful. Local activities can provide financial support and increase regional engagement.

Routine Meetings. Holding routine meetings in addition to the annual WAPOR meeting to foster continuous communication has been proposed. Regular interaction can help address issues and keep regional chapters aligned with central WAPOR. Frequency, format, and agenda for these meetings need to be planned.

European Focus and Legislation. WAPOR should increase their presence in Brussels to address restrictive EU legislation impacting public opinion research. Active engagement in European legislative processes can protect and promote public opinion research.

Discussion: Inclusion in Central Committees

RC suggested that leaders/ representatives of Chapters should be invited to attend all WAPOR Council Meetings as observers (without voting right).

Discussion: European Chapter

The discussion revolves around the potential establishment of a European chapter within the organization, with various speakers expressing differing perspectives and considerations. RC raised historical context, mentioning previous discussions on a European chapter and its relevance today. RC highlighted the need to integrate European members more closely and speculate on the feasibility of such a chapter.

Tom Smith (TS) discussed the existing rotational model between North America and Europe, emphasizing the practicalities and historical growth of the organization in these regions. KK and Paulina Tabery (PT) delved into the diversity and organizational challenges within Europe, suggesting that a European chapter could enhance regional engagement but also noting complexities due to diverse countries and existing memberships in other associations. Rosario Aguilar (RA) questioned the purpose of chapters in general, advocating for their role in integrating less advantaged societies into the global research community. RA raised concerns about the value proposition of chapters in well-developed regions like Europe and North America. RC also mentioned suggestions for incentivizing membership and discusses the possibility of chapters playing a larger role in organizing conferences and events. Overall, the discussion touches on the strategic implications, logistical challenges, and philosophical underpinnings of establishing regional chapters within the organization, particularly focusing on Europe. The idea of closer collaboration with existing organizations like ESRA is also suggested as an alternative approach to strengthening European presence without necessarily forming a separate chapter.

6. Proposals on transparency at WAPOR and polling on substantive topics

RC introduced proposal by Gary Langer, which advocates for increased transparency within WAPOR's operations. Gary proposes that submissions to journals and conferences should mandate comprehensive disclosures, including survey instruments, data sets, and coding syntax. This initiative aims to enhance scrutiny and facilitate the replication of research findings. RC emphasizes the growing trend in reputable journals towards such transparency initiatives, where authors are required to disclose all pertinent details related to their research process.

During the discussion, reference was made to an existing Transparency Initiative of AAPOR. DJ explains that this initiative mandates transparency in documenting studies but underscores the importance of protecting personally identifiable information. DJ expresses reservations about enforcing mandatory data sharing at conferences, citing potential risks and practical challenges, especially in contexts where data ownership by clients is involved.

Concerns about legal obligations and ethical considerations regarding data sharing were voiced. The constraints faced by practitioners who have contractual agreements with clients that prohibit the disclosure of data were highlighted. Participants argue that requiring data disclosure may not be feasible or ethical in certain sensitive research areas.

Throughout the conversation, there's a consensus on the importance of transparency in research methodologies to ensure credibility and reproducibility of findings. However, there's also a recognition of the complexities involved in data sharing, particularly in safeguarding privacy and respecting legal obligations.

RC then shifts the focus to Pablo Paras's proposal for a Global Report initiative under WAPOR. The proposal suggests starting with SDG (Sustainable Development Goals)



indicators, such as water quality. The idea is to coordinate annual studies conducted by WAPOR members and national representatives to synthesize existing research findings without necessarily collecting new data. This initiative aims to promote collaboration among WAPOR members while focusing on global issues of significance.

During the discussion, participants emphasized the practicality of summarizing existing research, identifying indicators, metrics, and methodologies used, such as those in measuring water quality. They suggested appointing task forces or committees within WAPOR to oversee such projects, highlighting the complexity and expense associated with primary data collection.

This perspective was supported by other participants by referencing WAPOR's existing initiatives, such as regular surveys related to publishing freedom and the production of national reports. These efforts involve officially collected data managed by WAPOR's national representatives. DJ advocated for coordinating research efforts among WAPOR members and national representatives rather than engaging directly in data collection. This approach aligns with WAPOR's role as an educational foundation focused on supporting professional development while ensuring rigorous methodology and transparency in public opinion research.

Overall, the discussion underscored WAPOR's preference for secondary studies and collaborative research initiatives over direct data collection. This strategy aims to leverage existing resources and expertise effectively while promoting thorough analysis and transparency in addressing significant global issues.