

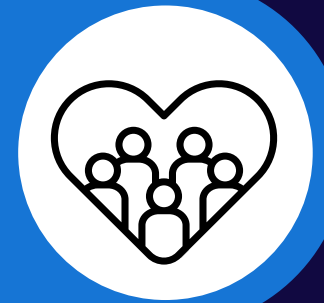
About these Findings

During the first few weeks of my tenure as The PHP Foundation's Executive Director, I wanted to hear what was on the minds of the PHP community, so I embarked on a sort of "Listening Tour." These slides represent some of the key themes that floated to the top.

Elizabeth Barron - April 2026

PEOPLE LOVE PHP

This feedback presents many opportunities for us to improve the ecosystem as a whole, but you should know that people still LOVE PHP.



SMALL SAMPLE BUT REPRESENTATIVE

I spoke with around 60 people from 18 countries, and from all parts of the PHP ecosystem. Your experience may not resonate, and that's ok. PHP is a big community.



THESE FINDINGS REPRESENT OPINIONS

To be clear, these findings are not indisputable facts, but they represent input from the community. They do not represent any official opinion of The PHP Foundation.



STILL LOOKING FOR FEEDBACK

This is not the end! My virtual door is always open to listen to your thoughts, ideas, and concerns.



Feedback Categories

These are the things that are top of mind for the PHP ecosystem



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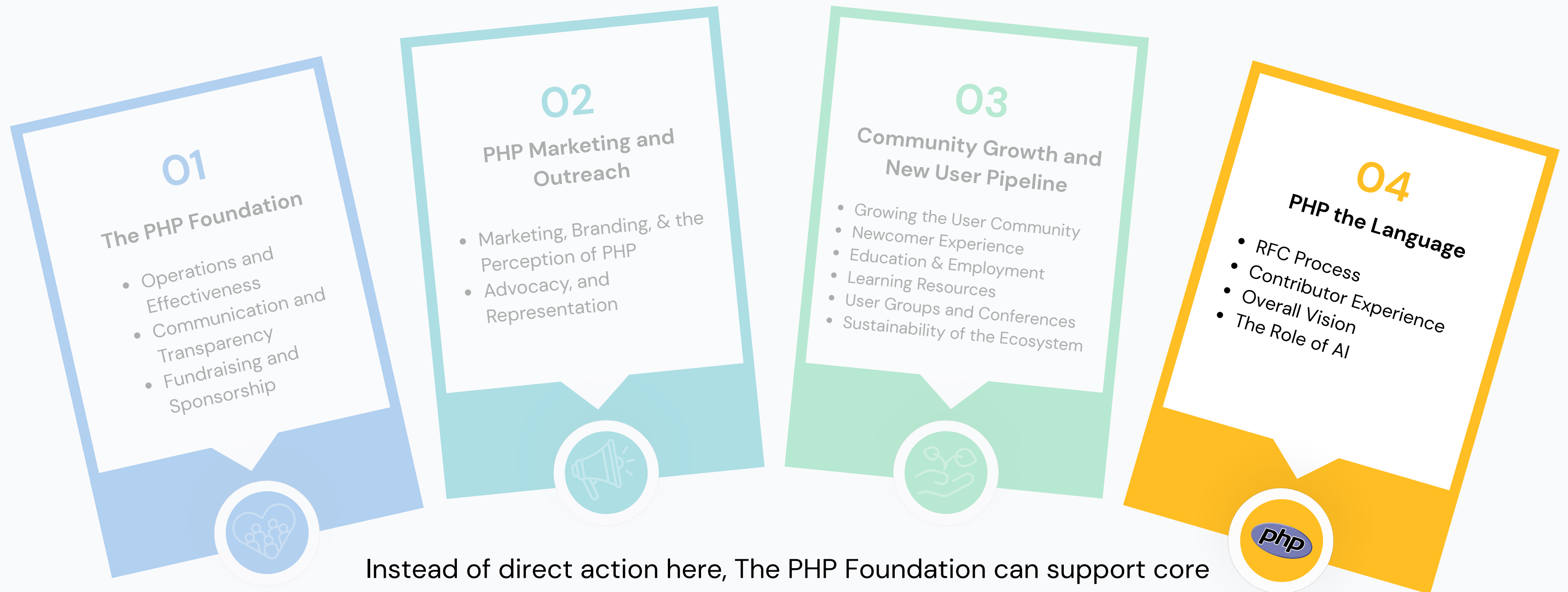
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The PHP Foundation can potentially take action to address these issues.

Feedback Categories

These are the things that are top of mind for the PHP ecosystem



Instead of direct action here, The PHP Foundation can support core contributors and decision makers wherever it makes sense to do so.

The PHP Foundation: Operations and Overall Effectiveness

There is a perceived lack of clarity, coordination, and structure

01

Priorities of Work

The processes for prioritization and decision making are unclear to the community.

"Priorities seem random"

"People are doing their own thing"

02

Working in Siloes

There could be better coordination between contractors.

"No one is coordinating which RFCs fit together"

"There is no Foundation Roadmap"

03

Unclear Work Assignments

It is unclear to the community who is working on what.

04

Responsiveness

Shared work among contractors would help improve responsiveness to issues and PRs.

The PHP Foundation: Communication and Transparency

Lack of visibility is eroding trust with the community

01

Ambiguity of Foundation Role

The relationship between the Foundation, the PHP Language, and the PHP Community is unclear.

"No one knows what the Foundation is doing"

"People know the Foundation exists—that's it"

02

Missing Clarity About Plans

The Foundation communicates the "what" but not the "why," and is not forward-looking.

03

Decisions are Shared After the Fact

Communications feel reactive and could happen sooner in the process.

04

Irregular Communication Cadence

A more consistent communication cadence would improve transparency and build trust with the community.

The PHP Foundation: Fundraising and Sponsorship

Funding is critical but could use support and coordination

01

Ambiguity of Fundraising Strategy

It is not clear when or if proactive fundraising is happening.

"Fundraising is the most important priority"

02

Stronger Sponsorship Relationships are Needed

There is not a great feedback loop or consistent sponsor engagement.

"We don't know what matters to sponsors"

03

Unclear Value Proposition for Sponsors

Clarity around benefits to sponsors and more information about what sponsors actually need would be helpful.

04

Fundraising is Ever More Challenging

A changing fundraising landscape is making it more difficult to raise funds across the open source ecosystem.

Note: these are presented in no particular order.

PHP Marketing and Outreach: Marketing, Branding, and the Perception of PHP

There is a gap between reality and perception

01

PHP can be Perceived as Outdated and Crusty

There is a perception outside the PHP bubble which might cause people to overlook PHP as a viable option.

"Everything people mocked us for is gone"

"People think PHP stopped at 5.4"

02

The Perception Does Not Match Today's PHP

The association people make with PHP is based on old assumptions about the language. People are not aware of the modernized PHP.

"No one is talking about PHP; they are talking about Python or JavaScript"

03

No Coordinated Storytelling

There is no coordinated community effort in telling the story of PHP's evolution or highlighting real world usage

04

Competing Languages Have More Visibility

Other open source languages are talked about and more visible in the open source ecosystem

PHP Marketing and Outreach: Advocacy and Representation

PHP lacks a voice outside the ecosystem

01

Limited PHP Presence at Open Source Events

PHP talks either aren't being submitted or they aren't being accepted at open source conferences as often as they could be.

02

No Coordinated Advocacy Function

People advocating for PHP are one-offs and not part of a unified effort.

03

Lack of Engagement with Decision Makers

Decision makers inside companies do not have accurate information about current day PHP.

04

Imbalanced Representation

PHP does not have enough representation in broader open source initiatives and policy discussions

"Nobody is talking about PHP"

"We are not present where decisions are made"

Community Growth and New User Pipeline: Growing the Community

The PHP community is strong, but fragmented

01

Global Community is Large but Lacks Cohesion

There are thousands of PHP developers across the globe but it is difficult to bring them all together.

"It's worrying that I recognize so many people at a conference."

02

Growth is Slowing and Retention is Declining

New users are coming to the language, but people are also switching to other languages.

"It is crucial for the language to realize the potential of the community and ecosystem."

03

Frameworks and Ecosystem Participants Operate in Silos

The language would be more powerful with a stronger collaboration across ecosystem components.

04

Community Growth is Underresourced

It's difficult to find resources for community leaders and initiatives that drive community growth.

Community Growth and New User Pipeline: New User Experience

Onboarding in PHP can be difficult and inconsistent

01

Onboarding Experience is Inconsistent

The onboarding experience seems to be different for everyone, with many relying on various communities and social channels for help.

"Onboarding is huge. It's our biggest hurdle with growing the community"

02

No Clear Onboarding Path

New users have difficulty knowing where to start.

"Hard to know where to start"

03

The Setup Experience Could be Easier

Setup for a newcomer can be tricky and complicated.

"Newcomers may not know they can come into Discord and ask questions that will be answered by experts"

04

No Centralized Place to Get Help

It's difficult for a newcomer to find help or know who to ask to find answers.

Community Growth and New User Pipeline: Education and Employment

The PHP ecosystem lacks a clear and supported pathway from learning to long-term career growth.

01

PHP Has Limited Presence in Formal Education

In many places, students are only taught Python and Javascript. PHP does not consistently show up in higher learning or bootcamps.

"PHP limits my job opportunities as a senior software engineer"

02

There is a Fragmented Educational Ecosystem

Some students are taught Laravel or Symfony but not PHP.

"Bootcamps teach React, not PHP"

03

Developers are Leaving PHP for Better Opportunities

Even if they want to stay with PHP, some are forced to switch languages because PHP jobs are hard to find. Companies are hiring senior level devs in Javascript or Python.

04

Decentralized Job Matching Makes it More Difficult to Find Relevant PHP Jobs

Job postings in the ecosystem are fragmented and spread across various sources making job hunting more challenging.

Community Growth and New User Pipeline: Learning Resources

PHP is strong in reference material, but there is a gap for new learners

01

PHP Manual is Strong, but Not Meant for Beginners

The PHP.net Manual is an excellent reference but assumes the reader already has a base of knowledge. There are no tutorials and some of the examples are outdated.

"People see these outdated resources and shouldn't be using them to learn."

02

There is a Learning Gap for Newcomers

Many existing tutorials and other resources already assume the user has some knowledge of PHP.

"The Manual assumes a level of knowledge already"

03

Learning Resources are Scattered and Can Be Outdated

It is difficult to find verified and relevant tutorials and examples because there are many scattered resources that have not been verified for accuracy.

"The Manual is an excellent resource but doesn't help you learn the language"

04

Mentorship is Difficult to Find

Mentorship programs that used to exist in PHP have become inactive without sustainable support.

Community Growth and New User Pipeline: User Groups and Conferences

Community spaces exist but need support

01

User Groups Need Help

User groups are still recovering from COVID-era restrictions, but they are fragile and can use support in attracting attendees and finding venue space.

"User groups are coming back!"

"Some conferences are struggling"

02

Conferences are Facing Sustainability Challenges

PHP Ecosystem conferences could use help with promotion, funding, finding speakers, and attracting attendees.

"There are some things you can solve in person that you can't online"

03

Diversity and Inclusion Remain as Issues

It is still difficult for conference organizers to attract a diverse pool of attendees and speakers.

"I really miss being able to go to my user group meetings"

04

There Could be More Coordination Among User Groups and Conferences

User Groups and conferences are often working in silos instead of coordinating with each other and solving common problems collaboratively. (A noted exception being MergePHP.)

Note: these are presented in no particular order.

Community Growth and New User Pipeline: Ecosystem Sustainability

The PHP Ecosystem is thriving but at risk

01

Bus/Lottery/Contributor Absence Factor Still Exists

Many PHP related projects suffer from lack of sustainable maintainer teams

"Burnout is real"

"Some projects have no succession plan"

02

Burnout is Common and There is a Lack of Support

Ecosystem maintainers are feeling burned out and there are no support systems in place to help them

"My project could use money to help me mentor new contributors"

03

Funding is Limited

Smaller projects could use financial support

04

Contributor Pipeline and Retention Could be Stronger

There is a lack of new contributors, especially those that stick around long enough to gain the trust of maintainers.

PHP The Language: RFC Process

The decision making process has worked for many years, but there may be room for improvement

01

Many People Have Difficulty Navigating the Mailing List

There are valid reasons to keep the mailing list structure, and for some this is an easy way to interact. Those who do have difficulty navigating the list could use more support and the discussions could use more visibility.

02

Ecosystem Representation and Engagement Could Be Improved in the Current Voting System

The voting system is not as reflective of active participants and those with a vested interest in the future of the language as it could be. The community does not participate as much as they could in RFC discussions, but it is unclear why.

03

Lack of Code of Conduct Creates Inconsistency in Interactions

Although it is improving, the experience with interacting on the php-internals mailing list varies wildly and there is a desire by some to revisit the CoC conversation (although it is acknowledged that the controversy may not make it worthwhile.)

"I wish that the community would participate more in the discussions of the RFCs they care about."

PHP The Language: Contributor Experience

There is still some friction with setup and installation.

01

Some Critical Extensions Could be Added by Default

Things like debugging could be more integrated into the main language.

"PRs take months to merge"

"Setup is better than it was, but still hard"

02

Contribution Process can be Slow

Sometimes the long response times on PRs or issues can discourage potential contributors. Some extensions are not maintained, or owners are not available and it's unclear if anyone else can step in.

"Internals documentation is critical and Internals Book is not fully updated"

03

Internals Documentation Could be Improved

Spending time reviewing and building out internals documentation could help new contributors. Existing resources aren't the most up-to-date. Sometimes document review is a bottleneck.

04

Setup and Installation can be Tricky

More research could be done to gain more data around installation experience.

PHP The Language: Overall Vision for the Language

Decision by committee makes it challenging to present a unified vision

01

Not Having a Long Term Vision Makes it Challenging for Others to Plan

A long term road map would be helpful to users and frameworks to plan ahead.

“People need to know someone is steering the ship”

02

Companies Want to Know What’s Coming

Companies planning large projects want to know that PHP is predictable, stable, and that the community is thinking ahead. Without this, it’s difficult for them to rely on PHP, so they may be more likely to choose another language.

03

PHP’s Challenges are Not Technical, But Perceptual

This ties into previous feedback about spreading PHP’s capabilities outside of the PHP Bubble. Having a unified vision for the future strengthens that story

04

A Long Term Vision Could Ease Tension Between BC and New Features

Being able to point to a roadmap is helpful, especially when it comes to BC. Knowing what will be deprecated in upcoming versions helps people prepare ahead of time, and eases the complicated upgrading process.

Note: these are presented in no particular order.

PHP The Language: AI

This is going to be a difficult thing to agree on, but it is on the minds of **many**.

01

No Unified Open Source Stance Makes it Challenging

There is no widely accepted industry standard and so we must forge our own path to the best of our ability. It will be difficult for us to also come to an agreed upon approach.

"No agreed vision for AI makes it hard to know what the future will look like"

02

Opportunities Come With Risk

Yes, accepting AI contributions can make it easier for new contributors, but there are many risks with regard to copyright, ownership, code quality, and maintainer burnout.

"AI could help newcomers contribute"

03

Must Also Consider Ethics and the Environment

AI's impact is deeper than just code. There are many ethical and environmental issues that need to be taken into account when discussing an official AI policy.

"AI is here to stay, so we have to figure this out soon"

04

PHP Representation in AI Tooling and Recommendations

AI Agents are a new "audience" for news, tutorials, and info about the language. As we market PHP more broadly, it would be wise to consider our placement here.