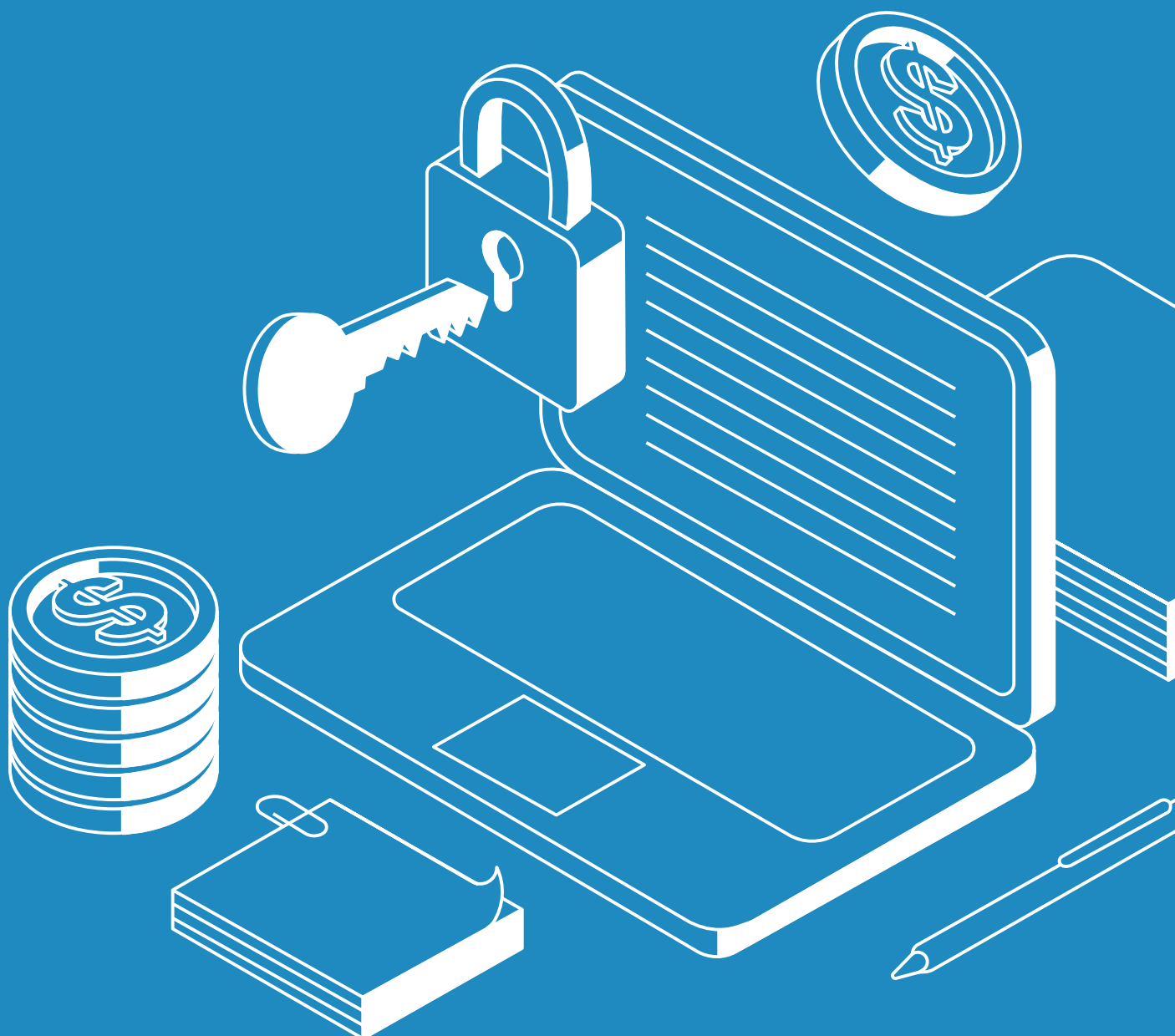


HANDBOOK ON PROPOSAL WRITING FOR GRANTS



Transparency Maldives (TM), the national chapter of Transparency International (TI), is a non-partisan civil society organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and undertakes other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption from the daily lives of people. Transparency Maldives views corruption as a systemic issue and advocates for institutional changes that will punish and prevent corruption.

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U.S. EMBASSY
Sri Lanka &
Maldives



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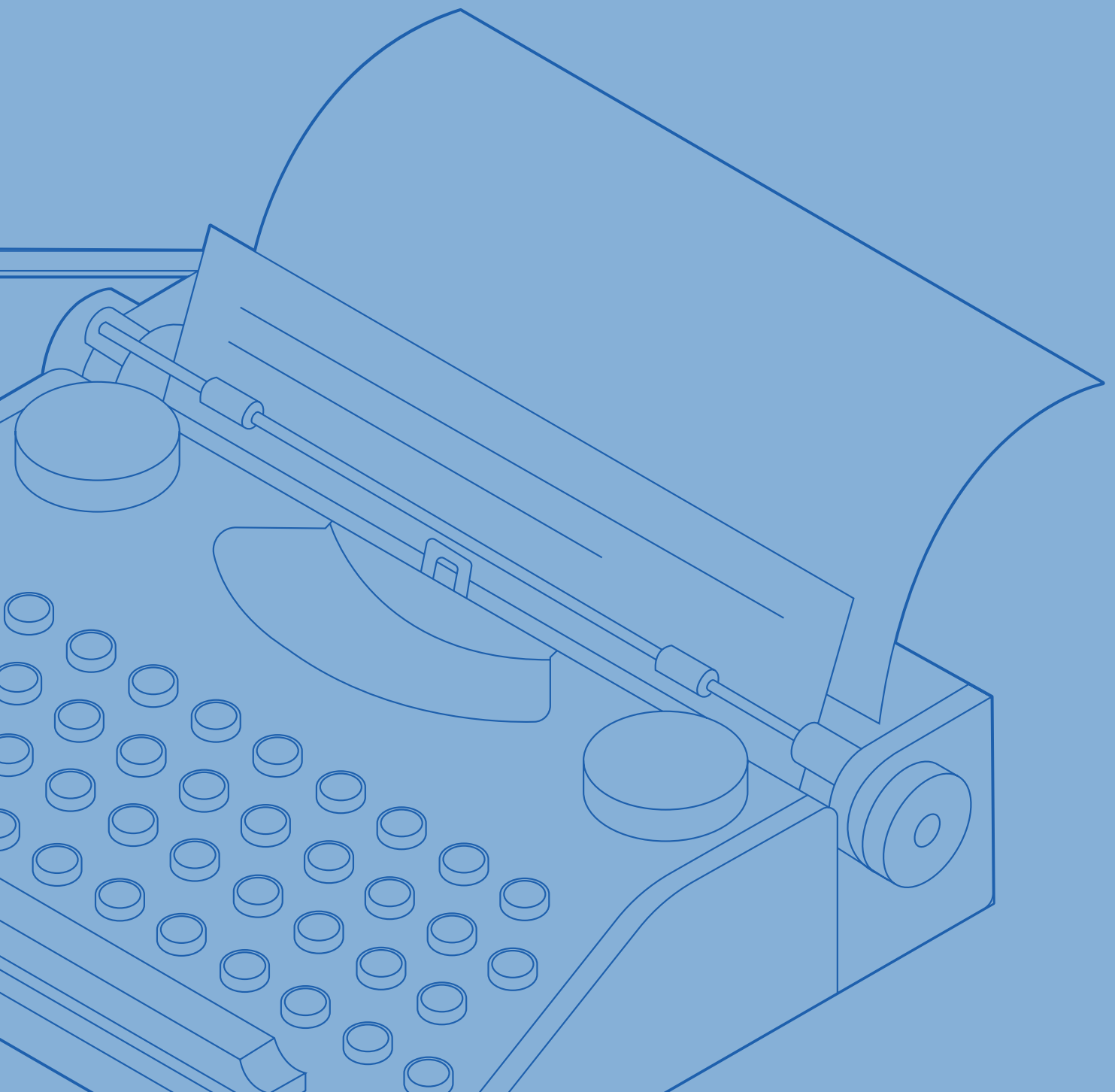
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction
Grant Writing



Introduction

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a pivotal role in promoting democratic values, good governance and human rights in a country, as they can play an active part in supporting the public to hold the state and elected officials accountable. For CSOs and civil society actors to be able to do this, it is important to have access to funding, information, and have the necessary knowledge and resources to fulfil their role in society in a more sustainable and independent manner.

Civil society actors need to be impartial, accountable and transparent in their work. In order to ensure this, it is important that the funding they seek are not affiliated to political person or bodies or businesses that can influence their work. In the Maldives CSOs often rely on sponsorships from local businesses limiting their independence and ability to impart independent work. One of the most common reason for this is limited information and fundraising capacity among CSOs especially smaller Community Based Organizations (CBOs). There is a need to build capacity of CSOs and CBOs to expand their funding bases and raise funding from multiple sources including opportunities available from international donors.

Funding that comes from external sources provides an added advantage of opening the possibility for collaboration with international donors and other international organizations.

It will also provide greater exposure and opportunities to learn and share knowledge and experiences with international agencies and local CSOs.

One of the main challenges faced by civil society actors is securing funds to carry out their work. This is especially profound in Maldives where the role and space for civil society continues to be challenged in the process of democratic consolidation in the country.

This handbook on Proposal Writing for Grants is a self-help guide targeted for individuals and CSOs to assist with fund raising efforts.

This book also aims to outline the basic DO's and DON'Ts of writing a proposal for funds. Please do take note that the terminology used in this book may not be applicable to all funding agencies.

Grant Writing

Proposals for grants are written to get funding for a specific purpose or project. The funding agency, donor or grantor provides money to organizations or individuals based on the proposal or concept note submitted to them.

Know your Donor



Research

What are the funding opportunities of donor and what are the dates of announcement?



Funds

What are the donor guidelines for grant application?



Guidelines

What are the donor guidelines for grant application?



Needs

Is there a specific format for proposal writing?



Formats

Is there a specific format for proposal writing?



Process

Is there a specific format for proposal writing?

Donor will look for these things



Budget

Is the budget realistic



Impact

Will your project make meaningful impact? Especially in areas the grantor is seeking to make impact?



Capacity

Do you have the capacity to carry out the project you are proposing?



Collaboration

Are you collaborating with another stakeholder? Is the partnership relevant?



Sustainability

What will be the outcome of this project you are proposing after the end of funding period?

Checklist Plan

Have you allocated enough time to write the proposal?



Problem

Have you allocated enough time to write the proposal?

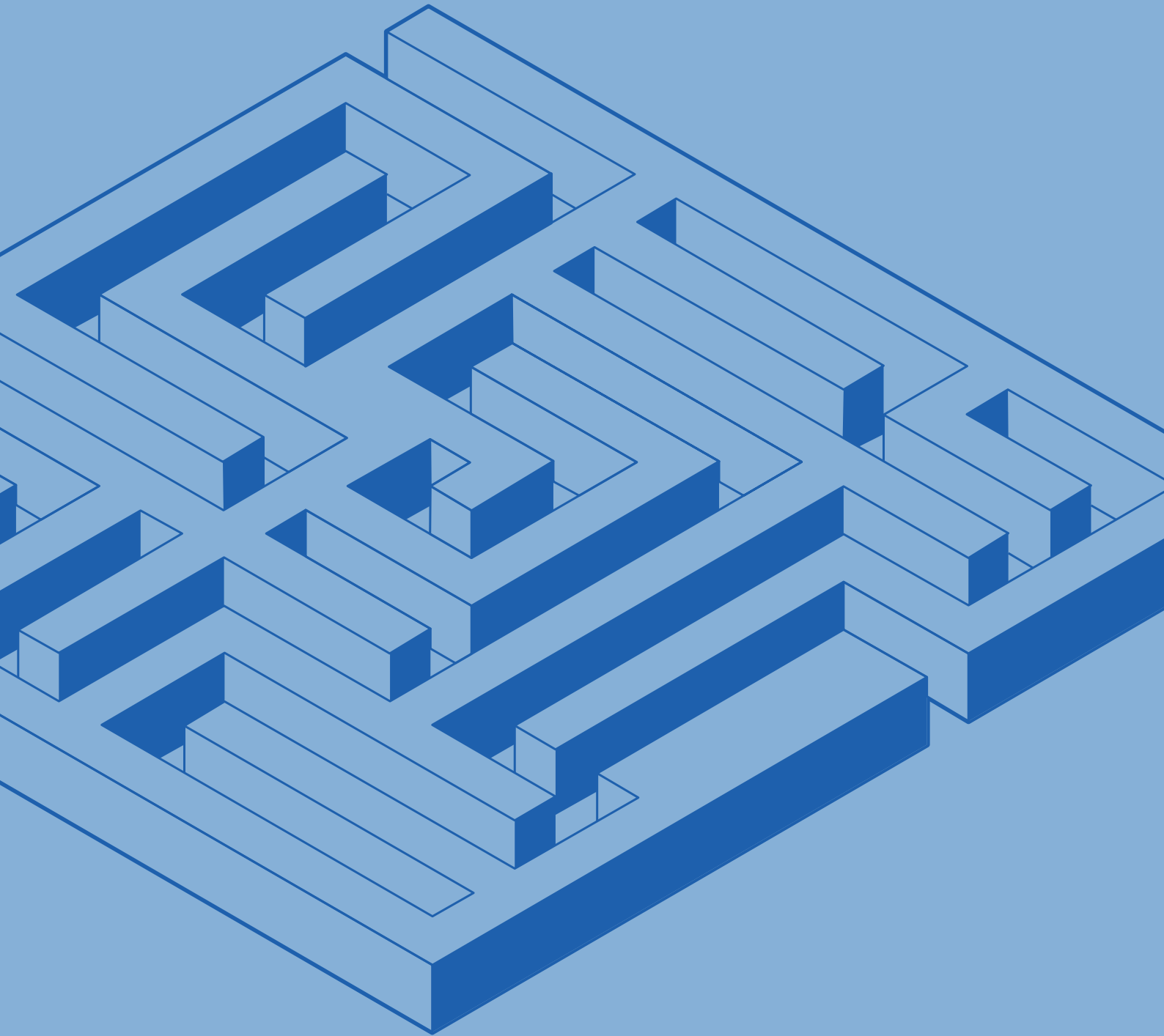


Review

Have you allocated enough time to write the proposal?

CHAPTER TWO

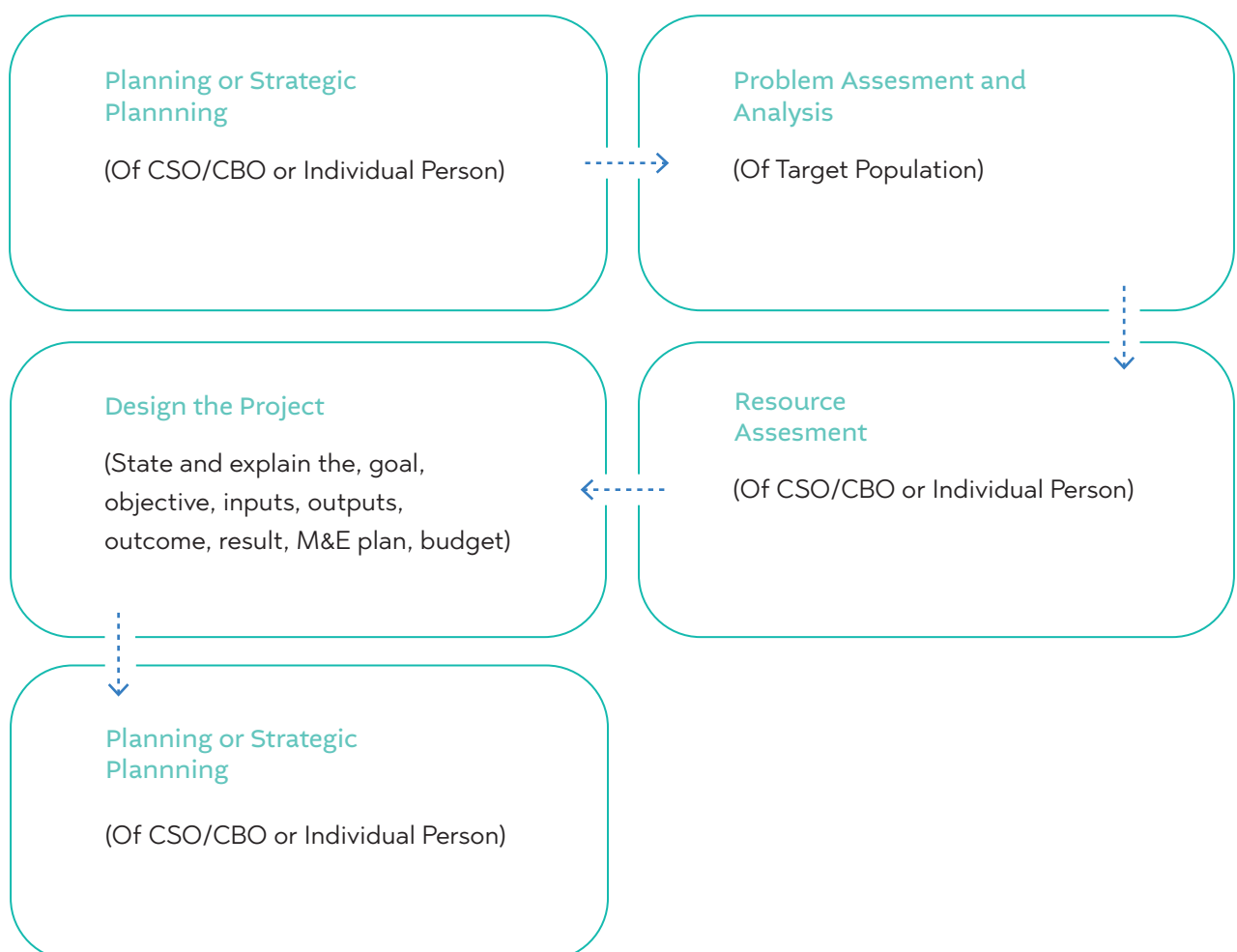
Logical Chain
of Proposal
Writing



Logical Chain of Proposal Writing

Some key things need to be kept in mind before writing a proposal. This includes activities that you need to do before putting pen to paper. Consider the following logical chain as an exercise that you need to conduct with your staff, volunteers or stakeholders before you begin to write the proposal.

A simple logical chain that can be followed before writing a proposal is illustrated below. It is essential that applicants go through each of these steps carefully and compile all the relevant information that can support the proposal.



A step-by-step guide of the logical chain is presented below.

1 Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is a document that puts on paper the long-term direction envisaged by an organization. A strategy is the prioritised plan of how you are going to reach your goals. While a clear direction may exist, having it writing ensures everyone including your trustees or, board, members, staff and volunteers and other partners and donors are aligned on the organizations' vision, mission value and key priorities.

Why Develop a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is the cornerstone of your organization's success as it acts a guiding document which shows where your organization is headed. It helps you to identify key areas where you should prioritize and give your time and energy. A strategic plan can show how a specific project fits into the organization's overall direction and can achieve meaningful and sustainable results.

A simple visual of what strategic planning is on the next page.



2 Problem Assessment and Analysis

The next step entails conducting a situational assessment. This activity will help identify a problem, the causes of the problem and develop solutions to resolve the problem.

It is crucial to use as much data and evidence at this stage to show how serious or relevant the problem is. A good situation analysis will help justify to the donor as to why the project should be funded. Involve your stakeholders as much as possible when doing situational analysis as this will help in the implementation of the project activities as well as ensure project sustainability.

3 Resource Assessment

This step requires you to assess all the resources that are at your disposal. By the end of this assessment, you will know your capacity as well as areas where more help is needed for addressing the specific problem you have identified in STEP 2.

4 Design the Project

Once the situational analysis and SWOT analysis are completed, revisit the problem you have identified in the situational analysis. This lays the foundation for the project and ensures that the project's objectives will contribute to the overall goal of the organization.

Once you narrow down on a cause to address, you can then decide on which interventions are needed or can help to address the problem.

Coming up with solutions or interventions

In coming up with the solution, you can use “project hypothesis”, which shows how your interventions are hypothetically connected to the intended goal of your project.

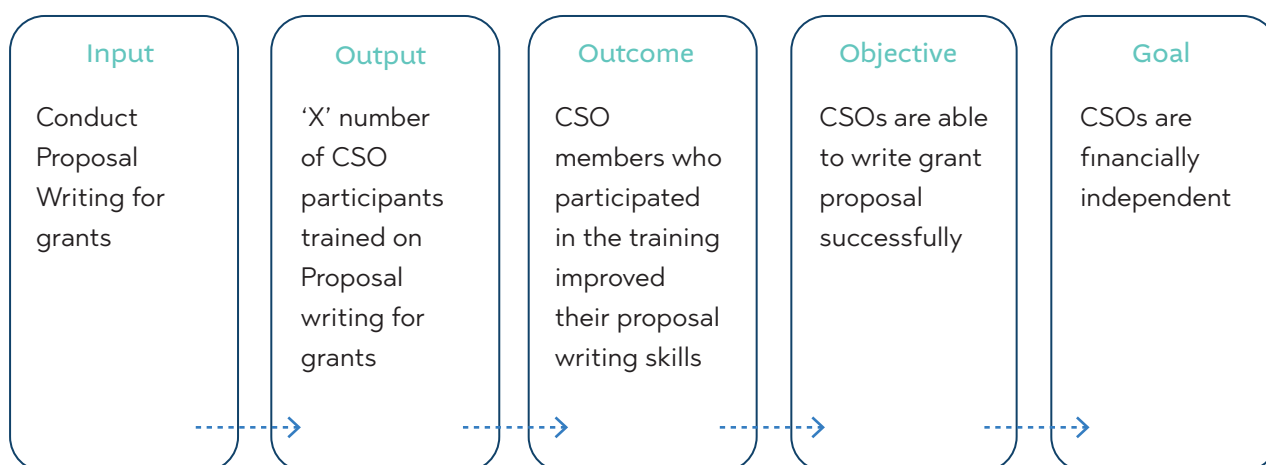
The hypothetical statement should be framed using “if” and “then”. For example, “IF we provide capacity building trainings to CSOs in proposal writing, THEN it would increase their knowledge in proposal writing which would result in more proposals being submitted to donors by these CSOs and securing funding for project activities”

Once you have all the necessary information with you, lay out a logical project design model. The logical project design model can be used to explain what you will do to address the problem and what solutions (usually referred to as interventions) you intend to bring about.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan is also part of the project cycle and should be designed during the initial project development stage.

In a good M&E plan, you should be able to clearly lay out how you will collect data on the project implementation, determine what data you will be collecting and finally measure the success of your project.

The logical frame for M&E flows like this.



Finally, you need to consider the budget for this proposed project. The purpose of the budget is to prepare a valid estimate of the costs associated with the performance of project activities using current assumptions.

5 Writing Project Proposal

Once you have all the above information in place, then you are ready to actually write the project proposal.

When you write your project proposal, you should clearly explain each of these sections in the format given by the donor. Whatever the format is these basic information needs to be in place.

Make sure you leave enough time to edit your proposal. The first draft of the proposal need not be perfect. An incomplete proposal is likely to get your proposal rejected straight away.

Checklist



Have you done a SWOT analysis of your CSO/CBO ?



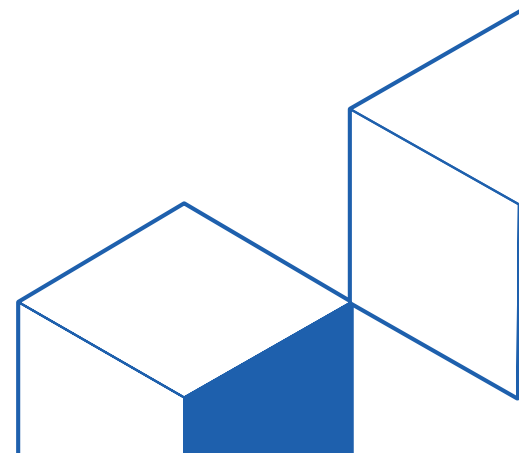
Do you know what needs of the community you can best serve?



Do have the resources and capacity to address this problem?



Are these needs that you plan to address the areas of the concern for the donor?

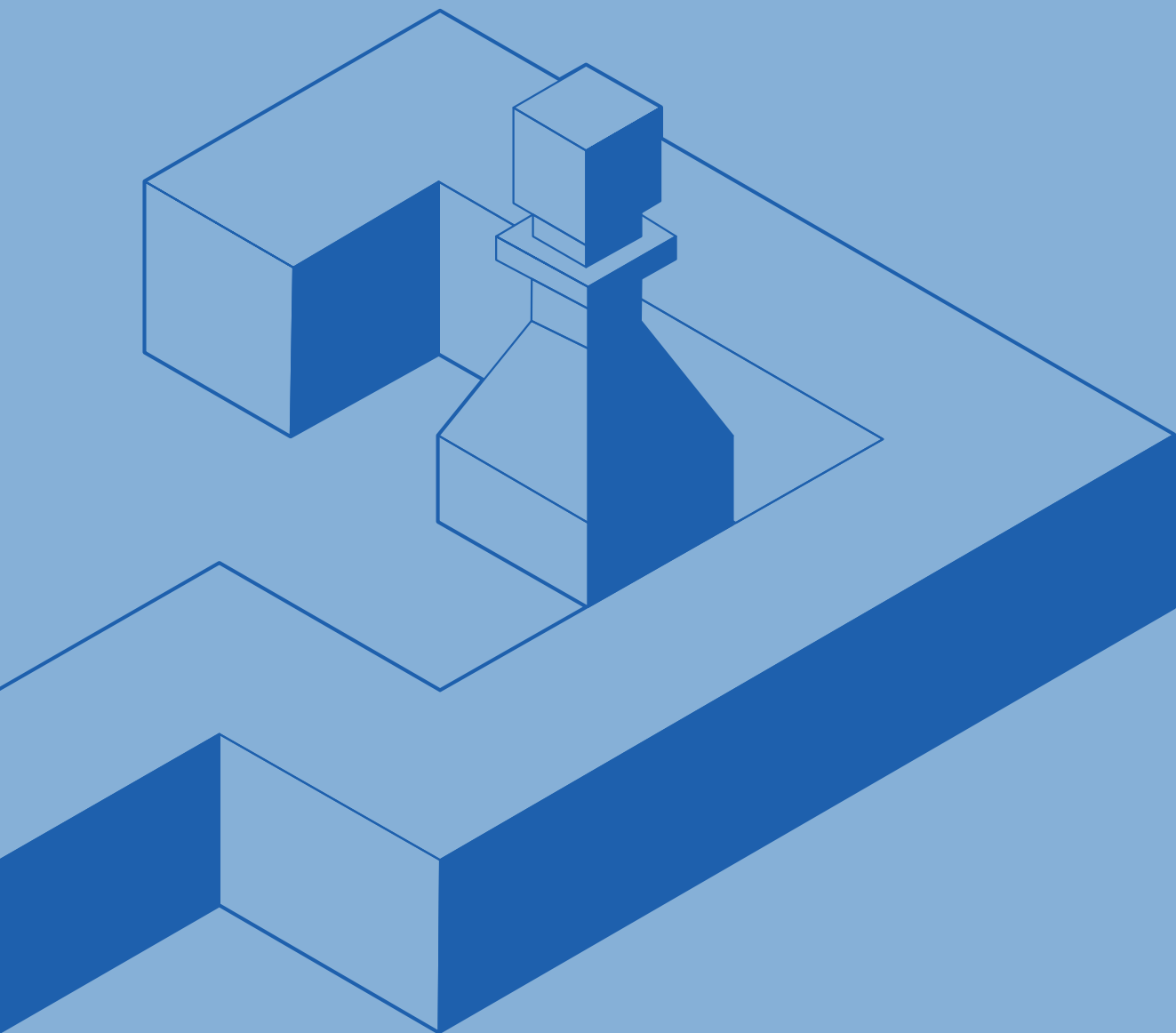


CHAPTER THREE

Problem
Identification
and
Assessment

Setting
Goals and
Objectives

Program
Description



Problem Identification and Assessment

The purpose of writing a project proposal is that you are trying to seek funds to solve a problem within the community. It is important to clearly understand what this problem is. This problem should be an unmet, urgent NEED of the community.

When you write a project proposal, in the section “Problem Analysis”, the following information is required.

- The unmet NEED of the community.
- How you found this information out.
- Data to prove the validity of your information.

Problem Analysis

Problem analysis is a systematic process used to determine causes and consequences of a problem and to link them in a cause effect relationship.

Problem analysis provides us with a tool to go more deeply into the underlying causes and effects of specific problems. In order to properly design a project, you should have a clear understanding of the problem.

To better understand the problem or issue, the following activities with stakeholders could be done:

- Personal Interviews
- Observation
- Meetings and discussions
- Questionnaires
- Statistics and data analysis
- Different reports

How do you link the problem and causes and consequences? One tool or technique used is using Problem Tree Analysis exercise.

Problem Tree

Problem tree is a diagram that shows how different factors that contributes to a problem and how a particular problem impacts a community. Problem tree can be constructed with the help of information and data or even through a small group discussion where all the relevant stakeholders are together.

In constructing a problem tree, first decide on the ISSUE or PROBLEM. This will be your starting point for the problem tree analysis. To begin the exercise, the facilitator (you) of the discussion starts with the question WHY is the problem/issue is happening in the community? Each answer will be noted in the roots part of the tree. The facilitator will keep probing the discussion by keeping on asking “WHY?” till you reach a point where the discussion will stop or in other words, comes to the very roots of the issue.

The leaves and the fruit part of the tree represents the effect or the consequences of the problem or the issue. The discussion on this part is led by asking WHAT is the result of this issue? Or WHAT is happening in this community as a consequence of this issue?



Problem

A problem is a specific negative situation related to a person or group's well-being.

Cause

Causes are factors that exist in the households, community, organizations, and country that have initiated or sustained the problem.

Consequences

Consequences are social, environmental, political or economic conditions that result from the problem

Case Study

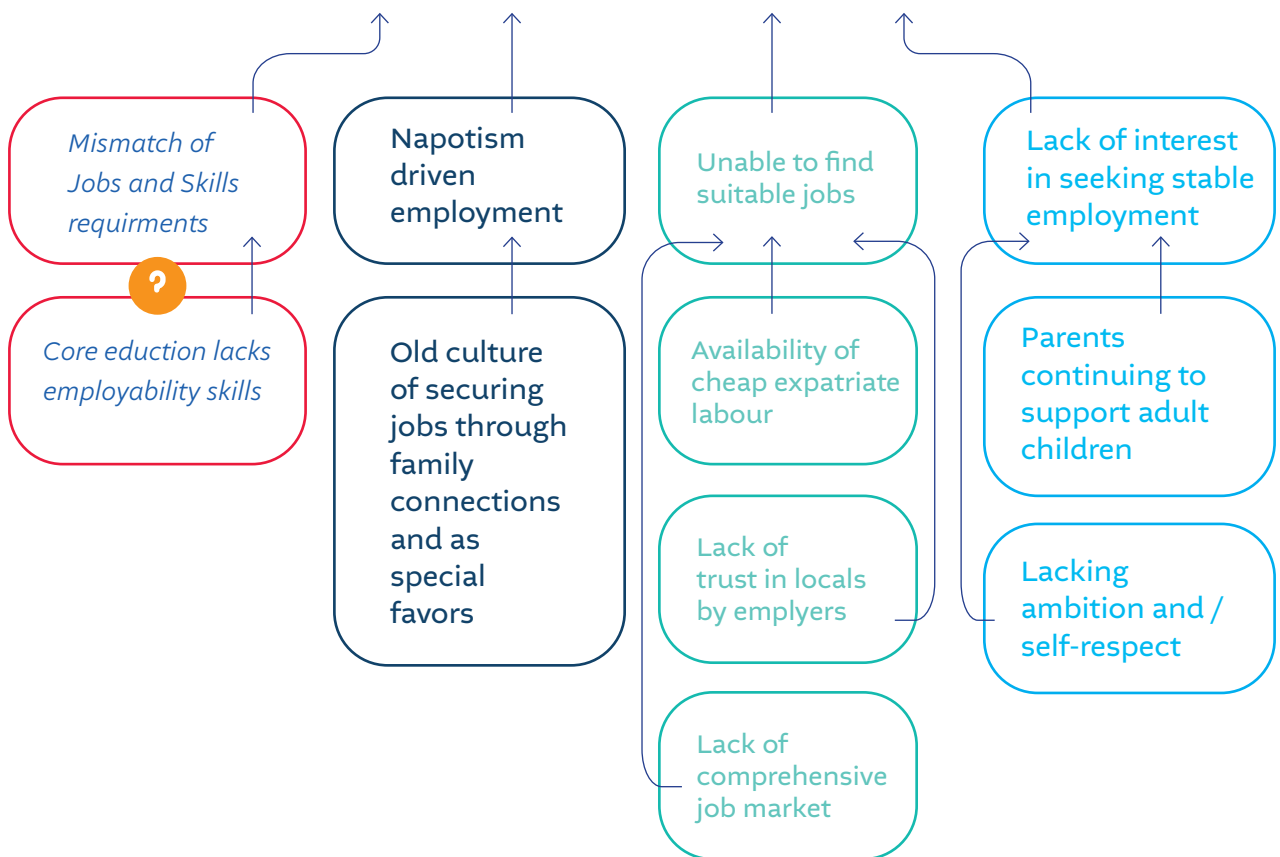
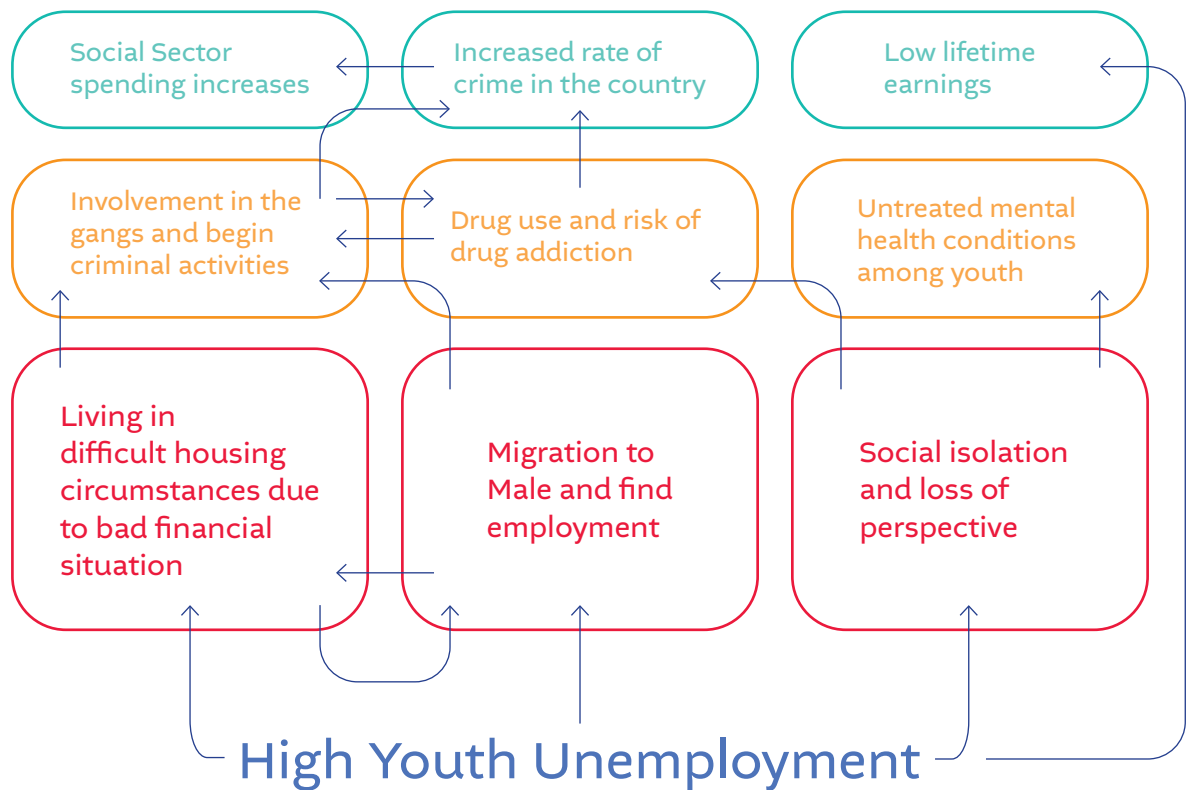
A CSO "Z" in the Maldives wants to better understand the problem High Youth Unemployment in Maldives.

This problem tree was constructed with the help of already existing data from the World Bank, UN and Government of Maldives.

In addition to these data resources, they also had Focus Group Discussions (FDG) with relevant stakeholders.

When you design your project, focus on the CAUSES.

Consequences



NOTE: Problem tree is not something you put in the project proposal.

Problem Statement

The problem statement is an important part of the project proposal and it outlines the basic relationship between effect, problem and cause.

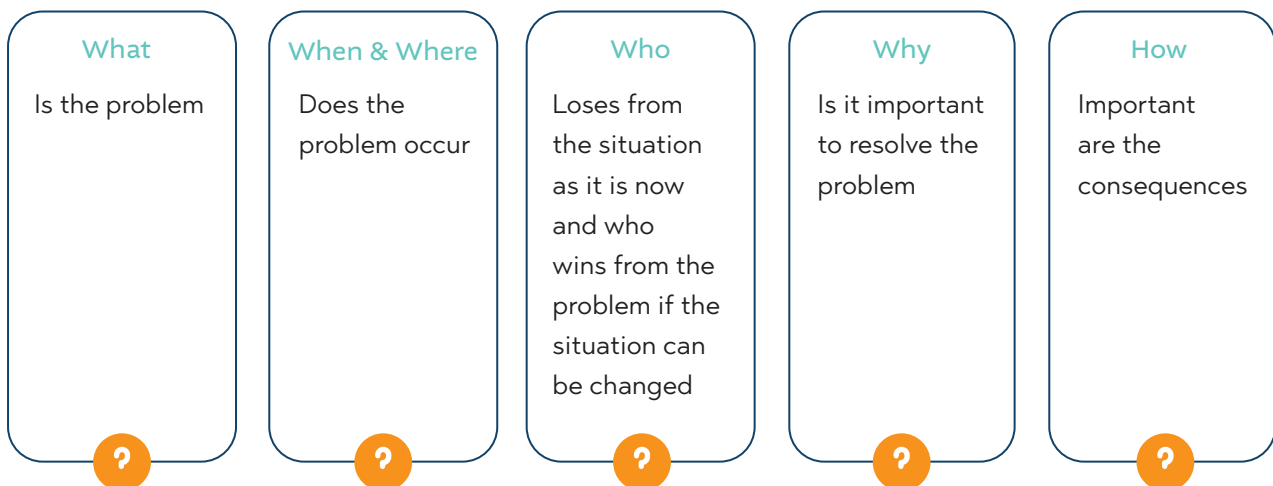
The problem statement can be formulated by the end of problem analysis.

When you write the problem statement, present the conclusion first, then facts and analysis.

Problem
Identification

Problem
Analysis

Problem
Statement



Setting Goals and Objectives

By the end of Problem Tree exercise, you will see a clearer picture of the root causes that contribute to the problem or the issue. By converting the root causes into actions, you will be able to identify what are the possible solutions you can provide for the problem that you identified. You can choose your interventions or solutions that are most suitable for your organization's capacity and focus. This SOLUTION will be your project. A summary of your project will outline goals and objectives of the project. When formulating goals and objectives, it is important to follow SMART rules.

Project Goal

The project goal is a big picture, long-term, the ultimate result that the project will contribute to. The goal is at the highest level and not usually measured in the project context.

Goal of Project

Project Objective

The project objective is a big picture, long-term, the ultimate result that the project will contribute to. The objective is at the highest level and not usually measured in the project context.

Objective of the Project



After constructing a problem tree CSO 'Z' used the same problem tree to come up with a goal and objective for their project

They decided to focus on these causes :

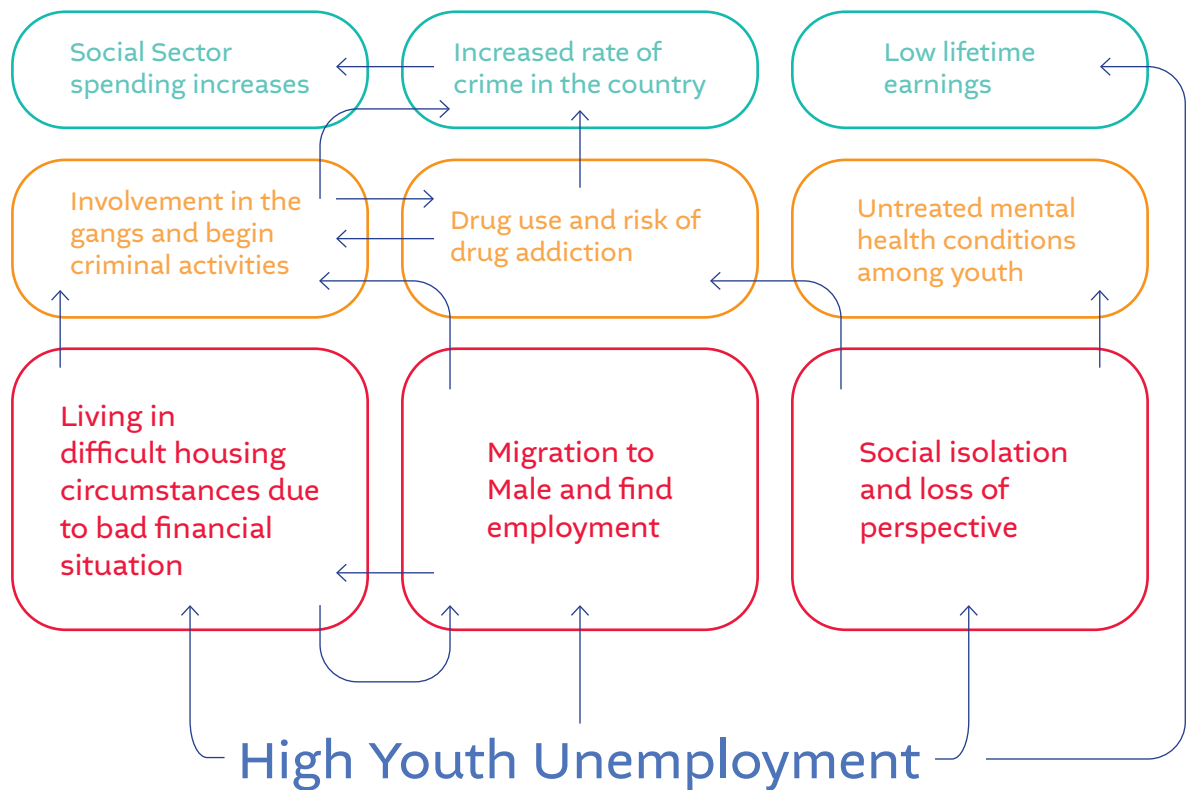
Goal :

Decrease youth unemployment by 50% in island X by 2030

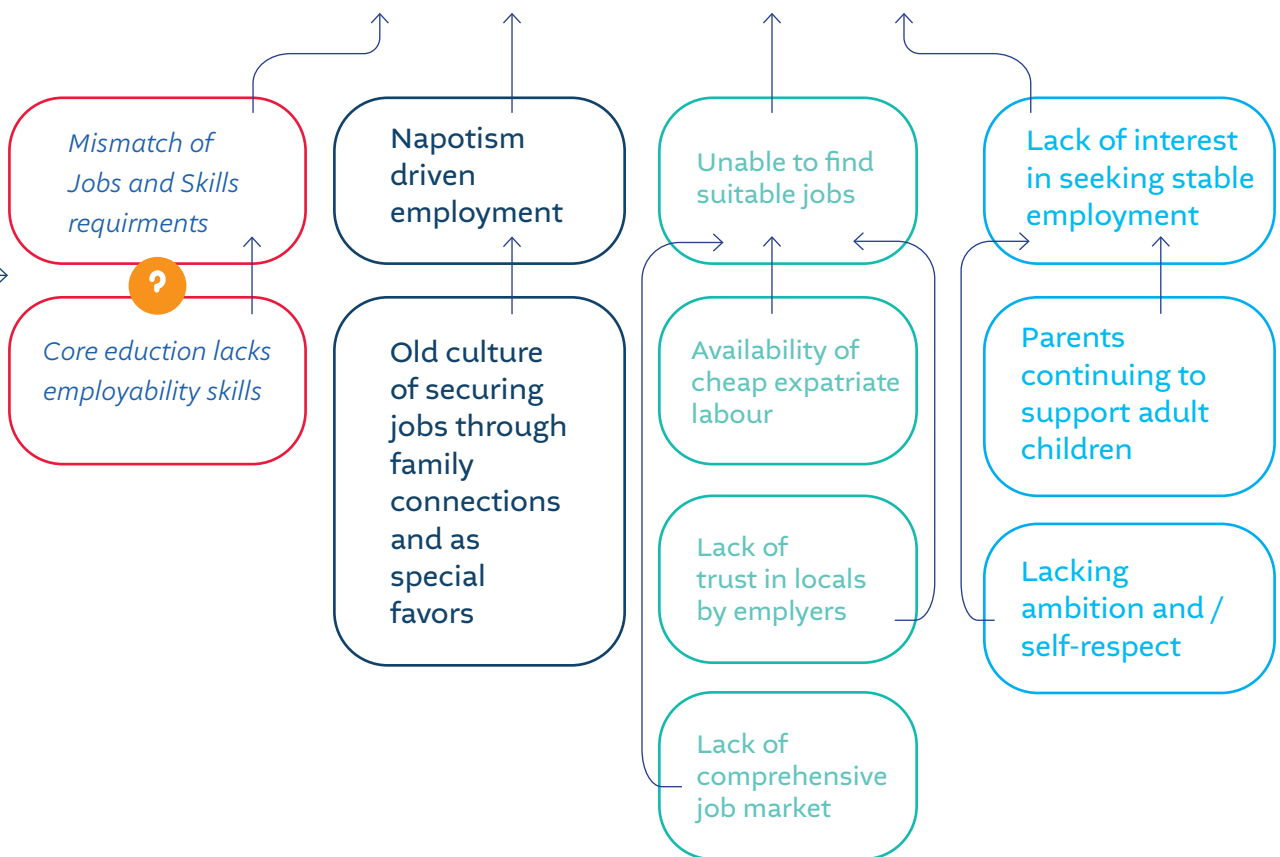
Objective :

50% of youth who participated the training secured a job within 6 months after the training

Consequences



Causes



Checklist for Project Objective

- ✓ Refers to the location and timeframe of the project
- ✓ Refers to the root cause of the problem identified
- ✓ Describes the focus population and the desirable change among them
- ✓ Specifies the target so that donor can evaluate the success of the project

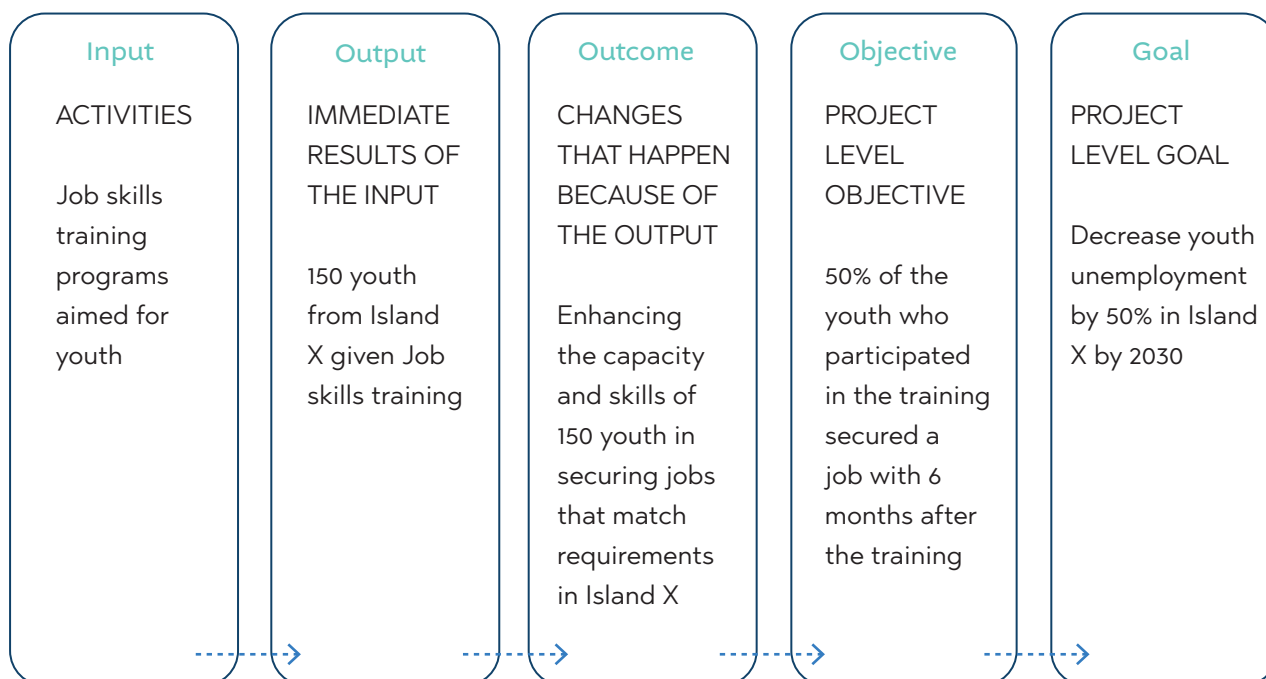
Checklist

- ✓ Focuses in areas that will make meaningful impact
- ✓ Goal of the project is consistent with CSO/CBO and donor goals

Program Description

The program description outlines what you intend to accomplish during the course of the award. Program description will explain how the project will address the problem or need.

It should include a detailed description of the program's location as well as the key activities you will be conducting.



NOTE: In your program description, try to narrate how your inputs will impact the goal of project. There should be a smooth flow or direct link from inputs to the goal.

Checklist for Program Description

- ✓ What are your planned activities? Where will these activities be held?
- ✓ How long will it take to complete the project?
- ✓ Who will be conducting the activities?
- ✓ Outputs you expect and how you plan to measure these.
- ✓ What makes your project so different and unique from other projects done before?
- ✓ Is there a smooth flow from your planned inputs to the goal of the project?

Critical Assumptions and Risks

Some donors will ask you to state the critical assumptions you made while planning the project. Closely related to this, donors may also ask you to state risks you will face during the course of implementation of this project as well as what you plan to do to mitigate them.

Critical Assumptions

These are external conditions over which you will not have any control over but will impact the success rate of the project. The assumptions that you explain should be specific, logical and relevant to your project.

Example:

A critical assumption that MAYA makes is that by the end of the skills training program provided to youth, more youth will use these skills to apply for jobs and therefore more youth will be employed.

Risks

These are problems or issues you may face during the implementation of the project. Risk mitigation means actions or steps you can take to minimize the impact of these risks so that the project can create meaningful impact. If the risks are too high, then donors may not want to fund your project.

Example:

There may be a risk of government-run vocational training center's inability to provide technical assistance according to the project timeline of MAYA. Then, a possible way to mitigate this risk would be to seek the assistance of universities and colleges in the Maldives.

The assumptions and risks are formulated based on the following areas.

Contextual

These risks are external and outside of the control of CSO

(eg : natural disasters, terrorist activity, political instability, lack of public infrastructure)

Programmatic

These risks are related to the project's design and implementation, which can result in the project failing to meet the needs of beneficiaries / or causing harm

(eg : diversion, lack of capacity, poor service delivery)

Organization

These risks are those that impact the security and welfare of workers as well as the organization's integrity

(eg : financial and human resource management systems / processes)

CHAPTER FOUR

Organizational
Capacity



Organizational Profile

In this section of the proposal, you will have to describe your organization. This includes a basic profile of the organisation, its mission, the staff (provide an organizational chart), and also the organization's capacity to implement the project.

Including available resources in a proposal for funding will have a favourable effect on its evaluation. So, do evaluate your CSO/CBO well enough to understand your strength.

Contact, encourage, and plan with local organizations/persons to collaborate in the project before or while preparing the proposal.

Wherever possible all personnel should be listed according to their required field of specialization and qualifications, together with a job description or, the minimum, their basic function.



Checklist

- ✓ Have you provided the organization chart of the CSO/CBO?
- ✓ What are the major roles and responsibilities of the key full-time staff?
- ✓ Have you described the roles and responsibilities of staff who will be involved in the project you are proposing?
- ✓ What other assets and resources does your organization have?
- ✓ Will you be partnering with other stakeholders? What external expertise will you be bringing into this project?

Past Performance

One of the reasons why some proposals are rejected is that the CSOs do not have adequate expertise in the area that the proposal is targeted at. It is important to concentrate on grants that are unique to your field of expertise.

So, when you finally sit to write the proposal, give a brief overview of your past experiences in project management, particularly in delivering projects similar to the one you are proposing.

Program Management

In this section you will explain how the program will be managed. Give a detailed account of the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers who will be part of the project.

This information can be tabulated in the following way.

Activity	Key Positions	Responsibilities	Time spent on project	Time Frame

Checklist



Have you given overview of your past projects ?



What are your past achievements and success stories ?



What are your past experiences with donors ?



What key positions are necessary for your current project you are proposing ?



Have you given a detailed account of key positions necessary for this project and how much time they will spend on the project ?

CHAPTER FIVE

Monitoring and Evaluation



Monitoring

Monitoring is a planning and management tool that gives regular and continuous feedback that can be used to make decisions, manage the project more successfully and plan for better project activities in the future.

When do we monitor?

According to the desired schedule of implementation of the project e.g. monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly or end of the project for small grants.

Why do we monitor?

- Assess the progress of the project
- Determine if the project is on track
- Collect data to check for risks to the project
- Identify successes and challenges and lessons learned
- Compile data that will contribute to evaluations

What do we monitor?

There are three basic types of monitoring commonly used in development work. That is, management and administration (staff, vehicles and supplies), finance (budget, salaries and cash flow analysis) and project activities



Evaluation

Evaluation measures how well the program activities have met expected objectives can be attributed to the program or intervention.

Evaluation will determine if a particular program was responsible for impact or change in the target population.

Indicators

Indicators are clues, signs or markers that measure one aspect of a program and show how close a program is to its desired path and objectives. They are used to provide benchmarks for demonstrating the achievements of a program.

Baseline Data

This means, what was the situation before intervention.

Targets

These are targets you want to achieve by the end of the proposal. Targets should be expressed in terms of timeframe.

Monitoring and Evaluation though used together, are two different activities. Here is a simple breakdown of the differences.

Monitoring

Continuous: day-today, routine, on-going activities

Documents progressing using selected indicators

Focuses on inputs, activities and outputs

Provides warning signs to managers

Self-assessment

Evaluation

Periodic: important milestones (mid-term or end project)

Comprehensive investigation, intensive review of achievements of program and other determinants of results

Focuses on goal

Provide managers with strategy and policy options of corrective action is needed

External assessment

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Monitoring and evaluation planning should begin at the start of the project as a starting point or baseline against which change can be measured. This means you will have to gather information during project design stage.

A strong M&E plan will provide a sense of the number of beneficiaries receiving project support as well as what changes this support brings about in their lives.

In an M&E plan, you should select appropriate indicators. It should describe the indicators that will be used to monitor program implementation and achievement of goals and objectives

A good indicator should :

- Measure only the condition or event it is intended to measure;
- Reflect changes in the state or condition over time;
- Represent reasonable measurement costs;
- Be defined in clear terms
- Qualitative (expressed in words, explanations.)
- Quantitative (expressed in numbers)

Sample Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

	Indicator	Definition How is it calculated	Baseline What is the current value
“Goal Decrease youth unemployment by 50% in island X by 2030”	Unemployment rate in island for youth	“youth is defined as 18 - 24 years of age. unemployed is defined as ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ “	70% unemployed in 2020 (example)
“Objective: 50% of youth who participated the training secured a job with in 6 months after the training “	Percentage of participants secured a job six months after training	Should be a job that they were not employed in, prior to the training	NA
“Outcome: Enhancing the capacity and skills of 100 youth to secure jobs that match job requirements in Island X”	Number of youth who passed the skill trainings	Evaluations / Practical and theoretical tests	Pre Assessment of participants
“Output: 150 youth from Island X given job skills training“	Number of youth given job skills trainings (data will be collected for male and female participants seperately)	Number who attended at least 80% of course and completed all assessments	NA
“Input/Activities: Job skills training programs aimed for youth“	“Number of job skills training held “	Full course implemented	No current job skills training program on island

Target What is the target value	Data Source How will it be measured	Frequency How often will it be measured	Responsible Person Who will measure it	Reporting When will it be reported
Reduce unemployment to 50% by 2030	Taken from island census conducted by government	Census is conducted every 5 years	National Bureau of Statistics	Published reports
50 % of training participants secured a job	Telephone survey of participants	1 time	Project coordinator	After 6 months
60% increase in skill level determined by Post Assessment	Pre and Post Assessment of Skill Level	Twice - Pre and Post assessment of skills	Project coordinator	Start and End of project
100 participants out of which at least 40 are female obtained the passed percentage	Attendance list	Everyday of training	Project coordinator and facilitator	During implementation
Conduct 5 batches of training program	Training report, Lecturer timesheets Training Guide Training Schedule Training Attendance Training handout (guides and handouts are not proof training was held)	NA	Project coordinator and facilitator	After each training

Timeline to track success of the program

A timeline is a way of visually describing the sequence of major program activities over time and should set clear benchmarks and timelines that can be used to track overall program progress.

Start by listing all major program activities in bold. Under each major activity, list the key tasks that need to be accomplished to complete the activity.

To complete the table, fill in the dates associated with each quarter for your program in the top row of the table.

Table on the right is a typical format used for small grant projects.

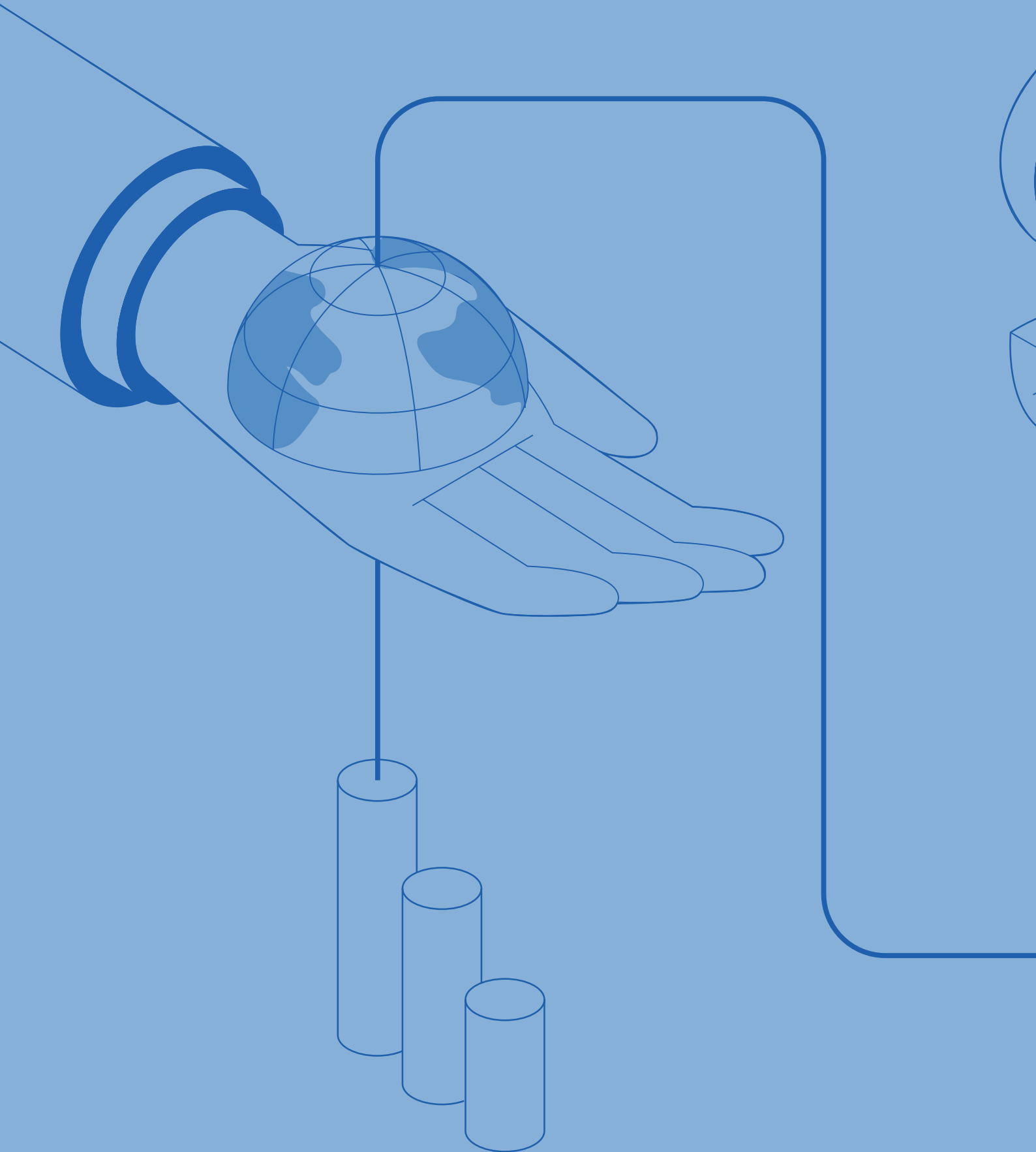
	Jan	Feb	Mar
PHASE 1	●	—	—
ACTIVITY 1	●	—	● Jan 3 - Mar 15
ACTIVITY 2	—	●	—
ACTIVITY 3	—	—	—
PHASE 2	—	—	—
ACTIVITY 1	—	—	—
ACTIVITY 2	—	—	—
ACTIVITY 3	—	—	—

Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec



CHAPTER SIX

Sustainability
Plan and
Amplification
Plan



Sustainability Plan

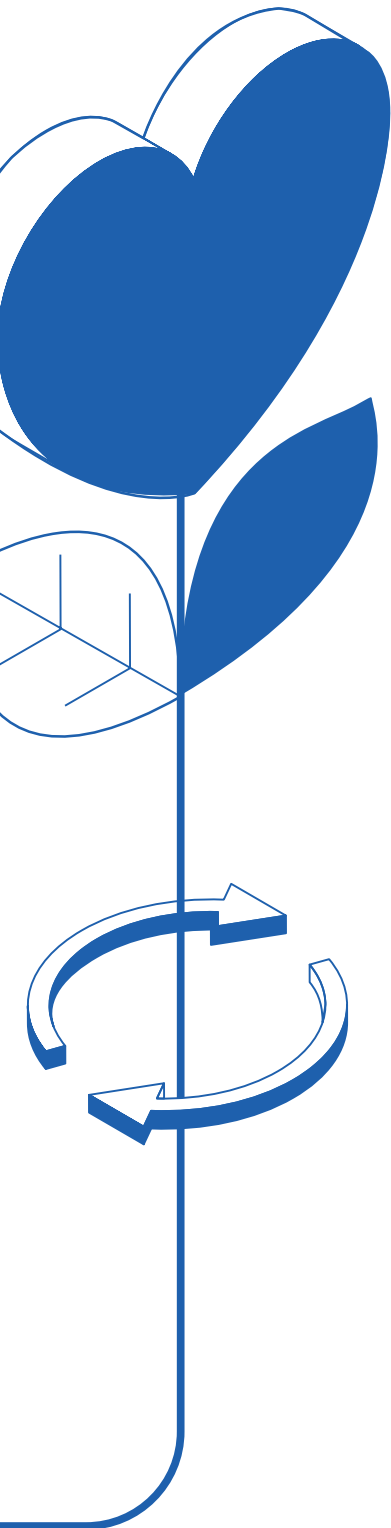
Sustainability is defined as the ability to achieve desired goals and maintain the ability to continue activities over time.

A sustainability plan should detail what will happen to the project once the grant is over. There should be a clear plan in place in order to continue the project so that the goals and objectives of the project will continue to be achieved.

Identify what needs to be sustained in order to continue to achieve your project goals and objectives.

The following are the reasons why sustainability needs to be in place in your project proposal.

- To ensure that beneficiaries will continue to be served well beyond the grant period.
- To assure donor agencies that their investment will not be lost
- To convince the donor that you have planned wisely for the future of your project
- To ensure that the organization's investment is not lost



Elements of Sustainability

Organizational Sustainability

Has a Plan for Future

Is Pro-active and Flexible

eg : CSO has a plan to carry forward this project beyond the donor grant period

Financial Sustainability

Limited reliance on outside resource.

Plans of income generation activities

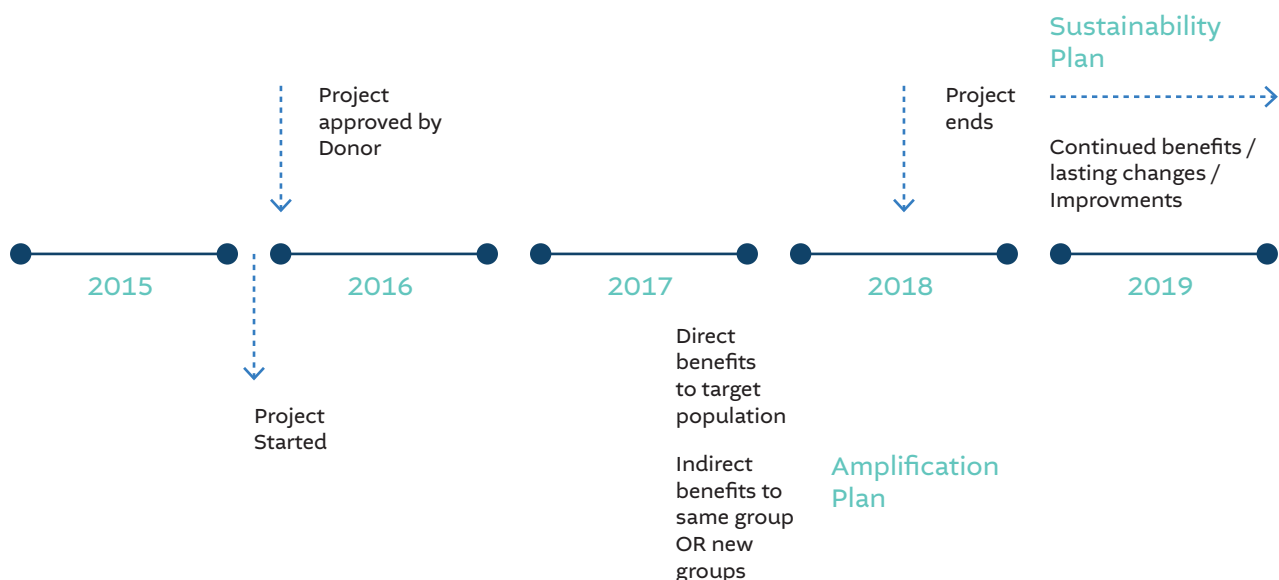
Community Sustainability

Community Ownership

Community Involment in planning and implementation of the project

Amplification Plan

The amplification plan refers to your plans for showing the maximum visibility and impact of the project. This means, in addition to your primary focus group, there should be a plan for your project to reach secondary groups as well. Include here your social media campaigns or activities, interviews with the media and similar promotional activities you plan to carry out.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Budgeting



Budgeting

A budget is money or funding that an organization plans to raise and spend for a set purpose over a set period of time.

In donor language, a budget is prepared against a given donor grant value. In this case, the budget should determine how the grant funds will be used for the proposed project or program.

Proposals are often rejected if the proposed budget exceeds the grant value and also if the budget is not justified for the proposed activities. Give Consider carefully and match proposed activities with the budget and provide justifications for any budget proposed.

For small grants, an activity-based budget works best. Activity-based budgeting is a form of zero-base budgeting and is widely used in the development and humanitarian relief sector. It is ideal for creating accurate and complete project budgets.

Follow these steps to make an activity based budget

- 1** Identify the project objective
- 2** List the Activities
- 3** Identify and Quantify the resources
- 4** Research the cost of resources
- 5** Identify the know income
- 6** Compile the budget worksheet
- 7** Review the results
- 8** Summarize the budget

Budgeting Summary

Category

Description

Personal

Identify Key Personnel and the percentage of their time dedicated to the project.

Fringe Benefits

Additional benefits offered to an employee, above the stated salary for the performance of a specific

Consultants

This category may include individual consultants and subrecipients. When applying for a contract, individual consultants should be listed with a daily rate and estimated number of days.

Travel and transportation

Identify all travels and provide justification for it.

Equipment

Identify equipment that will require waivers or approvals, including vehicles, and provide a justification. Also, identify procedures you will follow in procurement

Supplies

Include supplies, materials, and expendable equipment under US\$5,000 in this category unless you have a section for "program costs," and it is more appropriate to list the items there

Contractual Services

Identify partners and include a short description of the activities you will implement with them or have them implement.

Program Cost

Program costs cover beneficiary-related items, such as test kits, training materials, charges for renting training facilities, promotional materials, services for beneficiaries, and expendable equipment

Indirect Costs

These are general operating expenses, example overheads, rent and support staff salary etc

Checklist

- ✓ Is the budget fit for the purpose identified in the proposal
- ✓ Are the budget calculations clear ?
- ✓ Are the cost justified and supported by clear budget notes ?
- ✓ Did you follow donor guidelines and rules for budget formulation ?



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