Connecting with Donors

"IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO ALONE, IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER"

– African Proverb

PART 3

MODULE 3.1

The "Elevator" Speech

TOTAL TIME

3 hours

AGENDA

3.1 The "elevator" speech

- **a.** Defining the elevator speech (20 minutes)
- **b.** Looking at the elements of an elevator speech (30 minutes)
- **c.** Developing a basic elevator speech (40 minutes)
- **d.** Practicing your elevator speech (30 minutes)
- **e.** Refining your elevator speech (60 minutes)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

This workshop focuses on a tool—the elevator speech or pitch—for helping you open a dialog with prospective funders. For detailed guidance on identifying potential donors, see modules on *Resource Mapping*.

If sessions are presented as stand-alone workshops, see "Getting Started" at the beginning of the guide.

Introduction

Say: This module is about helping you start a conversation with prospective funders or partners. At any time you may run into a potential donor, partner or someone who represents a group of people who could benefit from your services or products. The best way to prepare for such chance meetings is to be able to recite a short, clear introduction to what your program is about. It should spark the listener's curiosity to want to learn more. With that in mind, this module is designed to help you:

- define essential elements of your organization or program of interest to prospective funders or partners,
- use those elements to design a pitch or brief speech that can start a dialogue with them, and
- practice, refine and deliver your pitch with confidence.

The exercises begin by defining a few terms and then take you through the process of writing, delivering and refining your pitch.

ATTENTION

The exercises in this module are designed to build on one another. It is best if they are completed in the order presented.

Handouts are provided at the end of the module.

MODULE 3.1a

What is an Elevator Speech?

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

20 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ define what an elevator speech is, and
- ✔ understand how it supports fundraising and other efforts to sustain an organization.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Handout—*Effective Elevator Speech Checklist*

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Set the stage for the session by reading the scenario aloud.

Scenario

Say: Imagine yourself in the following situation:
You are at an International AIDS Conference. You have just left the conference after a long day. You step into an elevator and see Bill Gates, CEO of the Gates Foundation, standing there by himself. He smiles and asks how you are doing. You know you have about one minute until the elevator will stop on your floor…what do you do?

*(**Ask** one or two participants to respond. Keep time, thanking and politely stopping each individual at 90 seconds, whether finished or not.)*

Say: Raise your hand if you have ever felt at a loss for words in a similar situation. What if you always knew the right thing to say whenever and where ever you needed to?

That short, clear statement that highlights the value of your program is called an **elevator speech.**

Explain: Why is it called an elevator speech? Because it responds to a challenge: How would you interest a dream funder in your organization if fate placed you and the funder in an elevator and you only had the time it takes to get from the top of the building to the bottom?

(It could just as well be called a "going down the stairs" speech or a "waiting-for-a-taxi" speech.)

The concept originated in marketing and sales where it is often referred to as an elevator "pitch" rather than an elevator speech. In any case, the elevator speech has become an essential tool that transcends the boundaries of the business world and the nonprofit sector.

This workshop is designed to help you understand the elements of a great elevator speech and help you prepare and present one.

An elevator speech is a quick, interesting, and useful way to introduce yourself and your organization. It is no longer than 90 seconds and is used to start a conversation.

It is NOT a detailed lecture about your entire organization—its strengths, weaknesses, staffing, or future vision.

Ask: Why is having an elevator speech so important?
(Suggested responses follow.)

- *You want existing and potential stakeholders, funders, partners or beneficiaries to know the value of what you do and to spark their interest in learning more about you.*
- *You only have 30 to 90 seconds to make a powerful first impression.*

Hand out: *Effective Elevator Speech Checklist*

Effective Elevator Speech Checklist

Please tick each box that reflects your assessment of the Elevator Speech presented.

Critical elements required in elevator speech	Excellent	Good	Needs more support	Comments

Say: I am going to read an example of an elevator pitch. Imagine it is being made to a USAID program officer at an HIV/AIDS conference in Maputo, Mozambique. I will read it twice. Before I begin, look at the *Effective Elevator Speech Checklist.* The first time I read the speech, listen. The second time, use the checklist to rate the speech.

> Hello. My name is Prudence Jones and I am a program officer for Positive Women for Change. Our nongovernmental organization works in Maputo to empower women who are living with HIV and AIDS to start and grow successful businesses. Our services include testing, peer health counseling, job training, and one-on-one business coaching. Here is my business card. May I have yours so I may follow up with you next week?
>
> *[This pitch is 70 words.]*

Discuss *how and why participants rate the pitch as they did.*

Wrap up

The process of creating an elevator pitch shines a light on what your organization or program does and hopes to accomplish. Even if you are not looking for funding, developing an elevator pitch can help you figure out what is essential to communicate about your organization.

In the next module, we will read and hear more sample elevator speeches and explore what makes a pitch effective.

MODULE 3.1b

Looking at the Elements of an Elevator Speech

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

30 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ identify the key elements they believe best describes their organization.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart with four columns: **Who? What? "Unique What"? Where?**
- ☐ Handout—***Sample Elevator Pitches and DOs & DON'Ts***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

On flipchart paper draw columns with these four headings at the top: **Who? What? Unique What? Where?**

Ask a participant to read aloud the first example of an elevator speech. Then, ask the group to identify each of the key elements in the example while you write them down on the flipchart in one of the four columns. Repeat for the second example.

Say: A successful elevator pitch is short and to the point. It emphasizes what is essential about your organization's products and/or services. It is designed to start a conversation.

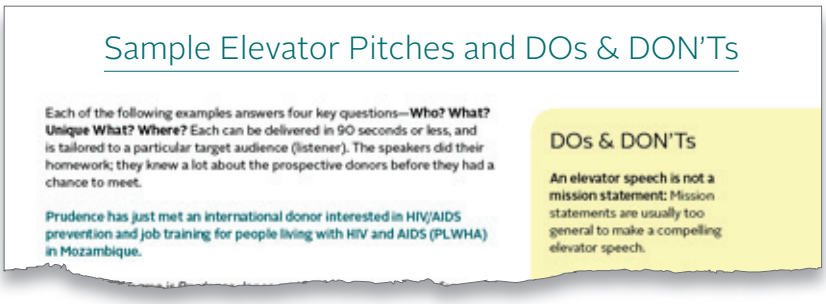
An elevator speech answers four key questions—not necessarily in this order:

1. **WHO** are you and who are the people/population(s) you serve?
2. **WHAT** do you do? (Your niche—see Module 1.3)
3. **WHAT IS UNIQUE** about your organization? What approaches or results can you mention that set your organization apart? Why should the listener fund/work/partner with you? (Message)
4. **WHERE** do you work? What is your geographical reach?

and

It ends with a request or call to action.

Hand out: *Sample Elevator Pitches and DOs & DON'Ts*



Sample Elevator Pitches and DOs & DON'Ts

Each of the following examples answers four key questions—**Who? What? Unique What? Where?** Each can be delivered in 90 seconds or less, and is tailored to a particular target audience (listener). The speakers did their homework; they knew a lot about the prospective donors before they had a chance to meet.

Prudence has just met an international donor interested in HIV/AIDS prevention and job training for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) in Mozambique.

DOs & DON'Ts

An elevator speech is not a mission statement: Mission statements are usually too general to make a compelling elevator speech.

EXERCISE

Elevator speech ingredients

(Refer to the handout with sample elevator speeches.)

Say: I would like a volunteer to read the first sample elevator speech to the group two times. The first time, everyone will listen. The second time, use the *Effective Elevator Speech Checklist* while you listen to rate the pitch and identify what was done well and what needs to be improved. Then, we will repeat the process with the second sample speech.

(Please note, each of these is tailored to a particular listener or audience. In example 1, Mary is talking with an international donor who is interested in youth development and health.

Participant reads example 1 out loud.)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

After each sample pitch is read out loud, ask the group to identify each of the key elements—Who? What? Unique What? Where?—in the example while you write them on the flipchart.

Example 1

It's nice to meet you. My name is Mary Smith with the HIV Teen Alliance (WHO) in Nairobi (WHERE). We provide counseling, schooling and job training for teenagers who once were unemployable and often turned to begging. (UNIQUE WHAT). Our funding comes from USAID and the local department of health. For the last three years the HIV Teen Alliance has helped hundreds of HIV-positive teenagers learn skills and find employment (WHAT).

Say: In the next example, Victor focuses on a donor who cares about women's empowerment, food security and HIV prevention.

Example 2

Good afternoon, my name is Victor Banda. I am the Executive Director of Farmers for Hope (WHO). We're reviving traditional farming techniques and teaching new ones to caregivers—many of them elderly women—so they can grow, store and provide more and healthier food for their families (UNIQUE WHAT). With funding from USAID and the Ministry of Agriculture, we've helped hundreds of individuals and families affected by HIV and AIDS in some of the most remote areas of Zambia (WHAT, WHERE) over the past 10 years.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Be very positive. Reassure participants that they have the ability to develop an elevator speech.

Wrap up

Now that we have explored the key elements of an elevator speech and heard a few examples, after we take a short break, you will develop your own elevator speeches.

BREAK: 10 minutes

MODULE 3.1c

Developing an Elevator Speech

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

60 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ use the key elements they identified to draft a persuasive elevator pitch.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Handout—***Preparing Your Elevator Speech***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

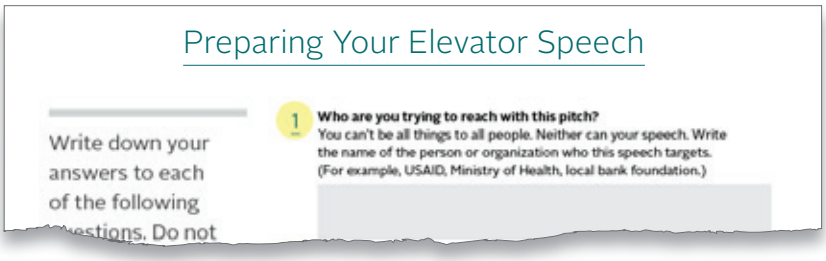
Depending on how many people are gathered, you may want to break the group into pairs. Keep strict time. Move around the room and observe how the drafting is going for each group. Provide relevant input if asked.

EXERCISE

Identifying the key elements of your elevator speech

30 minutes

Hand out: *Preparing Your Elevator Speech*


Preparing Your Elevator Speech

Write down your answers to each of the following questions. Do not

1 **Who are you trying to reach with this pitch?**
You can't be all things to all people. Neither can your speech. Write the name of the person or organization who this speech targets. (For example, USAID, Ministry of Health, local bank foundation.)

Say: Before you create an elevator speech for your organization, program, service or product, answer each question on the *Preparing Your Elevator Speech* worksheet. For example, question one: **Who are you trying to reach with this pitch?** Think about your target audience—are you talking to the head of a local faith-based organization? A local business owner? A national or international donor? Then, answer each question in turn with your target audience in mind. You may develop several different elevator pitches to appeal to different target audiences.

You will have 30 minutes to answer all of the questions on the *Preparing Your Elevator Speech* worksheet. You may want to refer to the work you did in Part 1 *(Defining a Sustainable Organization)* and Part 2 *(Mapping Resources)* to answer questions in the worksheet.

EXERCISE

Writing a basic elevator pitch

Say: You will have 30 minutes to draw on the elements you just identified to write a short speech of no more than 100 words. Look at the sample speeches for guidance.

Instructions:

Revisit the answers to questions 2–7 on your worksheet.

- WHO is your **target** audience?
- WHAT is the issue or problem your target audience is trying to solve?
- WHO are you and who does your organization/program serve?
- WHAT does your organization do?
- WHAT IS UNIQUE about your program?
- WHY is your program important?
- WHERE do you work—your geographic reach?

You will add the call to action—the answer to question 8—later.

Outline your speech. Keeping your target audience in mind, start with a list of phrases that capture what you really want to say. Do not worry about writing complete sentences.

Write your speech from your outline:

1. Write a sentence about each element in your outline.
2. Connect one sentence to another by using additional phrases to make the sentences flow naturally into a paragraph.
3. Review what you wrote and circle the clearest, most powerful words and/or phrases. Also change any long words or jargon into everyday language.
4. Read your speech out loud to yourself and edit again, cutting out any unnecessary words, but keeping the elements you circled. Read it again. Edit as appropriate.
5. Repeat step 4 again and again until you are satisfied that your pitch is memorable and contains no more than 100 words.

Wrap up

Review what you have written. Did you time your pitch? It should be no longer than 90 seconds. Go back to the *Elevator Speech Checklist* and rate your speech. How do you think you did?

Finally, ask yourself, does the speech:

- talk about those things of most interest to the target audience—prospective donor or partner?
- say what your organization can do for him or her?
- tell a story, not just list facts?

In the next module, you will practice delivering your speech.

MODULE 3.1d

Practicing your Elevator Speech

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

30 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ deliver an elevator speech in 90 seconds or less.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Handout—***Sample Elevator Pitches and DOs & DON'Ts***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

On flipchart paper draw columns with the four headings at the top: **Who/What/ Unique What/ Where.**

Ask each participant to read aloud his or her elevator speeches. Be sure to time each speech, cutting off any pitch that goes longer than 90 seconds.

After all of the speeches have been read and discussed, refer to *Elevator Speech DO's and DON'Ts* handout and review with participants.

EXERCISE

Talking the talk

Say: Now let's share our elevator speeches with each other. After each elevator speech is read out loud, the presenter will tell the group how many words were in the pitch. Remember, any pitch longer than 90 seconds will be stopped.

While you are listening, jot down what you heard as answers to four key questions—**Who/What/Unique What/Where.** You may want to refer to the *Elevator Speech Checklist* to rate the speech.

When I say "go," the presenter will deliver their elevator speech. After each presentation we will debrief. Who will go first?

Debrief: *Ask the following questions after each presentation:*

- *What words or phrases did you use or hear that worked?*
- *What did you say or hear that did not work?*
- *What was missing?*
- *What could make it better?*

Refer to Sample Elevator Pitches and DOs & DON'Ts. *Review with participants.*

Wrap up

If the elevator speech you just created is not smooth, easy, or natural yet, do not worry. As you use it, you will find that it gets better and better and it sounds more natural. It may vary a bit each time you give it. That is fine as long as the essential elements are always presented. We will continue to refine the speech in the next module.

MODULE 3.1e

Refining your Elevator Speech

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

60 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ refine their pitch so it ends with a specific call to action, and
- ✔ deliver their pitch with increased confidence

MATERIALS

- ☐ Handouts—***Anatomy of an Elevator Speech; Role Play—A Call to Action***

Say: As you create your speech, keep in mind your goal. That is why our next step is to modify your elevator speech so it closes by requesting that the listener do something. Review your elevator pitch with this in mind.

Ask: What are some of the possible purposes or goals of the pitch? Refer to your response to question eight on the *Preparing Your Elevator Speech* worksheet.

Write goals on flipchart. Possible responses include:

- *get a business card so we can stay in touch*
- *discuss a partnership on an upcoming request for proposal*
- *invite the person to tour a program site*
- *set up a meeting*
- *other ideas?*

Say: Remember you are not lecturing, but trying to engage the listener in a conversation. For example, when speaking with a potential donor, your goal might be to request a meeting where you can share more about your programming and how your organization will help the donor achieve their goals. With this in mind, you might end your pitch with:

> "I would appreciate meeting with you to discuss our (UNIQUE WHAT) further. What is the best way to contact you?"

Perhaps you expect to meet a representative of your country's USAID Mission at a conference or you want to enlist the support of a local bank representative. Think about how you will add a specific request to your existing elevator speech. Here are a few examples of specific requests:

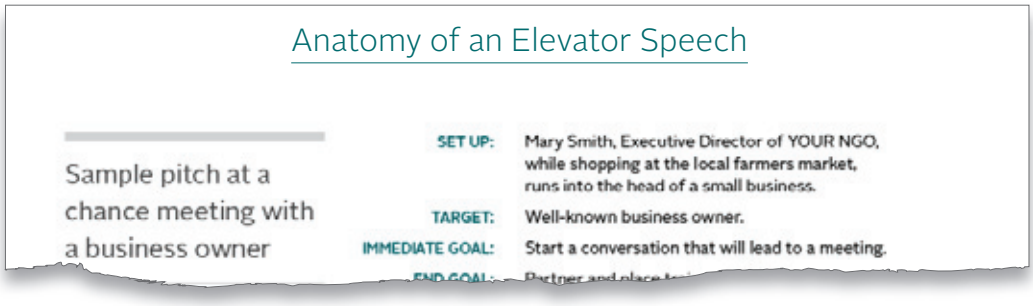
- "I'd like to meet with you to discuss how (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) complements your work in HIV and AIDS in (NAME OF REGION) where you are planning a new project. May we arrange a meeting perhaps for next week?"

- "It was a pleasure meeting you. May we exchange business cards? I would like to send you information about how (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) is working to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Here is my card."

While shopping, you run into a local business leader you know. Your elevator speech reminds her of the work your NGO is doing and ends with a specific request.

- "I understand you own several buildings in town. (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) is currently looking for low-cost meeting space that is on the number 12 bus line. May I call you to talk about finding space? What is your phone number?"

Hand out: *Anatomy of an Elevator Speech*



Anatomy of an Elevator Speech

Sample pitch at a chance meeting with a business owner

SET UP:	Mary Smith, Executive Director of YOUR NGO, while shopping at the local farmers market, runs into the head of a small business.
TARGET:	Well-known business owner.
IMMEDIATE GOAL:	Start a conversation that will lead to a meeting.

Say: Take a look at the handout *Anatomy of an Elevator Speech*. It looks a bit like a script for a play, except that it includes the reasons behind what is said.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Move around the room and observe how the practice is going for each group. Provide relevant input after each role-play. Once each person has had a chance to practice their enhanced elevator speech, end the role-play activity and process the experience with the participants.

EXERCISE

What is your call to action?

10 minutes

Say: Now it's your turn to add an "ask" or **call to action** to your elevator speech. You will have 10 minutes to add a request or "ask" to your elevator speech. You will have time to practice delivering this enhanced elevator speech during the next module.

Call time at 10 minutes.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Divide the group into trios. Explain the instructions for the role play. They will be practicing their enhanced elevator speech. As you explain each step, have the participants complete that step. When explaining Step 3, emphasize the importance of the role of the Observer/Coach—they are to support the NGO representative.

Begin Round One of the role play and circulate around the room, ensuring that participants are doing the exercise correctly. Call time at 2 minutes for Round One. Allot five minutes to the trios to debrief Round One. Tell them to switch roles and begin Round Two, call time, debrief; and then repeat for Round Three.

When all three rounds of the role playing exercise are done, bring the group together to review the exercise, encouraging discussion.

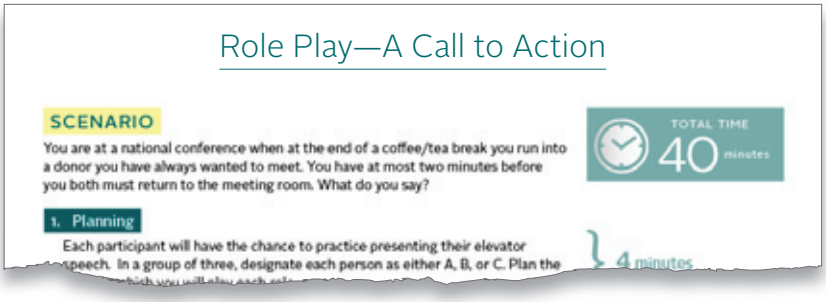
EXERCISE

Role Play—A Call to Action

40 minutes

Scenario: You are at a national conference when, at the end of a coffee/tea break, you run into a donor you have always wanted to meet. You have at most two minutes before you both must return to the meeting room. What do you say?

Hand out: *Role Play—A Call to Action*


Role Play—A Call to Action

SCENARIO

You are at a national conference when at the end of a coffee/tea break you run into a donor you have always wanted to meet. You have at most two minutes before you both must return to the meeting room. What do you say?

TOTAL TIME 40 minutes

1. Planning

Each participant will have the chance to practice presenting their elevator speech. In a group of three, designate each person as either A, B, or C. Plan the

4 minutes

Debrief: *Now that each person has had a chance to play all three roles, let's talk about the experience.*

Ask:

- *What words or phrases did you use or hear that worked?*
- *What did you say or hear that did not work?*
- *Were you successful? What does that mean?*
- *To what extent will the exercise make you more at ease giving your elevator speech in the same situation in real life? Would you handle it any differently?*

Wrap up

Remember, once you or other staff members are at meetings, conferences, and/or in communities reciting the speech, you will adapt the pitch to suit the situation. That is fine as long as you include all of the key elements and represent your organization well. It is also fine to have more than one elevator speech for different audiences.

Submit the speech to top management for review and approval. Develop a plan to introduce the speech to the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers.

All of your stakeholders (Board of Directors, management, staff, and volunteers) should be familiar with an elevator speech for your organization.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Encourage participants to continue practicing their elevator speeches with colleagues, friends and even family, to refine their pitch.

The more often you give your pitch, the better it will become and the more natural it will sound. As you feel more confident, you will add enthusiasm and energy to the telling. Try it out at a wide variety of gatherings and networking events.

There are many resources (and about 1000 YouTube videos) that clearly define an elevator speech. And even more that explain why you need one and its many potential uses for your organization.

Effective Elevator Speech Checklist

Please tick each box that reflects your assessment of the Elevator Speech presented.

Critical elements required in elevator speech	Excellent	Good	Needs more support	Comments
1. Who you are				
2. Who you serve				
3. What you do				
4. What is unique about you (niche)				
5. Where you work				
6. Jargon and acronyms are clearly avoided. The language is listener friendly.				
7. The speech is memorable and sincere.				
8. It ends with an action request.				
9. The speaker conveys warmth, friendliness, confidence, and enthusiasm.				
10. Passion about what you do is projected.				
11. The speech sounds effortless, conversational, and natural.				
12. Content and overall delivery of the speech				

Sample Elevator Pitches and DOs & DON'Ts

Each of the following examples answers four key questions—**Who? What? Unique What? Where?** Each can be delivered in 90 seconds or less, and is tailored to a particular target audience (listener). The speakers did their homework; they knew a lot about the prospective donors before they had a chance to meet.

Prudence has just met an international donor interested in HIV/AIDS prevention and job training for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) in Mozambique.

> *Hello. My name is Prudence Jones and I am a program officer for Positive Women for Change (WHO). Our nongovernmental organization works in Maputo (WHERE) to empower women who are living with HIV and AIDS to start and grow successful businesses (WHAT). Our services include testing, peer health counseling, job training, and one-on-one business coaching (UNIQUE WHAT). Here is my business card. May I have yours so I may follow up with you next week?*

Mary is talking with an international donor who is interested in youth development and health.

> *It's nice to meet you. My name is Mary Smith with the HIV Teen Alliance (WHO). We provide counseling, schooling and job training for young people who once were unemployable and often turned to begging. (UNIQUE WHAT) Our funding comes from USAID and the local department of health. For the last three years we've changed the lives of hundreds of HIV-positive teenagers who live in Nairobi (WHAT, WHERE).*

Victor focuses on a donor who cares about women's empowerment, food security and as well as HIV. His listener is a foundation representative who will find it reassuring that other major donors have seen fit to invest in Farmers for Hope.

> *Good afternoon, my name is Victor Banda. I am the Executive Director of Farmers for Hope (WHO). We're reviving traditional farming techniques and teaching new ones to caregivers—many of them elderly women—so they can grow, store and provide more and healthier food for their families (UNIQUE WHAT). With funding from USAID and the Ministry of Agriculture, we've helped hundreds of individuals and families affected by HIV and AIDS in some of the most remote areas of Zambia (WHAT, WHERE) over the past 10 years.*

DOs & DON'Ts

Do not confuse an elevator speech with a mission statement. Mission statements are usually too general to make a compelling elevator speech.

Do have several examples ready. What is important to include will depend on the listener, so be prepared with several options.

Do show impact and tell a story. Do not use numbers. Tell about your work in a real way, letting the listener know your impact and the importance of what you do for and with the people you serve.

Do end with a specific call to action. Have a goal in mind. Request something; ask to exchange business cards, invite the listener to tour a program site or meet staff or beneficiaries.

Do not use jargon or acronyms. If your family members or neighbors do not understand elements in your elevator speech (for example, do not say OVC, say orphans and other vulnerable children), there is a chance that the person in the "elevator" will not. Use clear and simple language.

Preparing Your Elevator Speech

Write down your answers to each of the following questions. Do not worry about writing complete sentences.

1 **Who are you trying to reach with this pitch?**
You cannot be all things to all people. Neither can your speech. Write the name of the person or organization who this speech targets. (For example, USAID, Ministry of Health, local bank foundation.)

2 **What is the issue your target audience is trying to solve?**
(For example, improve livelihoods for HIV+ women; enhance food security.)

3 **WHO are you and who does your organization/program serve?**

4 **WHAT does your organization do?**
Write it down in several ways. Brainstorm. Try to tell a story that illustrates what you do. Do not worry about length now because you will boil it down later into a short sentence that describes your organization's core service/product (niche).

5 **WHAT IS UNIQUE about your program/service/product?**
What approaches or results can you mention that set your program apart from others working in the same field?

6 **Why is your program important?**

7 **WHERE do you work? What is your geographic reach?**

8 **What do you want the listener to do as a result of hearing this pitch?**

NEXT STEPS

Refine. With the target audience and their issue in mind, combine your answers to questions 3 through 7 into one short paragraph. Then,

- Read it quietly aloud to yourself and a partner a few times. How does it sound? Refer to the checklist used earlier.
- Circle the clearest, most powerful words and/or phrases.
- Edit and/or rewrite your speech, keeping the elements you circled. Read it again. Edit as appropriate.
- Finalize your speech by making sure it is no more than 100 words long.

Practice. Role play with a colleague or preferably with someone not too familiar with your organization.

If possible, record your elevator speech then, review it to fine-tune the content as well as your delivery.

Anatomy of an Elevator Speech

Sample pitch at a chance meeting with a business owner

SET UP: Mary Smith, Executive Director of YOUR NGO, while shopping at the local farmers market, runs into the head of a small business.

TARGET: Well-known business owner.

IMMEDIATE GOAL: Start a conversation that will lead to a meeting.

END GOAL: Partner and place trainees in business.

Sample talking points	Rationale
Hello, my name is Mary Smith with YOUR NGO. For the last three years we've changed the lives of hundreds of HIV-positive teenagers who live in OUR TOWN. *We provide counseling, schooling and job training for young people who once were unemployable and often turned to begging.* *Our funding comes from USAID and the local department of health.*	Tell your story and use a "hook." Introduce unique aspect of mission—works with teenagers. Know your audience when describing what your organization does—trains capable workers. Keep it simple. Do not use jargon (for example, OVC or sustainable solutions.) Breathe. Listen, look for nonverbal cues, adapt as necessary.
I have some interesting ideas for your business that I'd like to discuss at a more convenient time. What is the best way to schedule a meeting?	Aim for an immediate goal, but keep the end goal in mind. Since this is not the time or place for a long conversation, aim to start a dialogue that will lead to a meeting. **Do not ask to place a trainee.**
How may I contact you? By phone or email? *May I have a business/visit card?*	Be polite and respectful. Ask for contact information—a phone number or email address.
Thank you.	
We all meet so many people every day, to help you remember our organization, I wanted you to know that three of our trained seamstresses designed and made all the uniforms for the local ABC elementary school.	Before parting, mention something hard to forget that reinforces the organization's mission and accomplishments.
Here is my card. I will follow up in a few days. It was a pleasure meeting you.	Before handing over your card, write a short note on the reverse—for example, "trainees made ABC school uniforms"—as a reminder to the recipient.

Role Play—A Call to Action

SCENARIO

You are at a national conference when, at the end of a coffee/tea break, you run into a donor you have always wanted to meet. You have at most two minutes before you both must return to the meeting room. What do you say?

1. Planning

Each participant will have the chance to practice presenting their elevator speech. In a group of three, designate each person as either A, B, or C. Plan the order in which you will play each role.

4 minutes

	Person A	Person B	Person C
ROUND 1	NGO Representative	Prospective Donor	Observer/Coach
ROUND 2	Prospective Donor	Observer/Coach	NGO Representative
ROUND3	Observer/Coach	NGO Representative	Prospective Donor

2. Set-up

Agree on the profile of the Prospective Donor (for example, international donor—USAID; local business owner; local official, etc.) and what the issue or problem is that most interests the donor.

2 minutes

3. Role Play

Begin the role play. Your roles are as follows:

2 minutes

NGO representative	Present your elevator speech ending with a specific request. Feel free to pause at any time to request assistance from your coach
Prospective Donor	Respond as you expect a donor to respond based on the profile developed in the set up
Observer/coach	Coach the NGO representative as appropriate to help him or her deliver an effective elevator speech with a specific request for action.

4. Debrief (5 minutes)

Review the exercise by discussing the following questions:

- What words and phrases worked well?
- How did the body language match the words?
- What could the NGO representative have said differently?
- What was the "ask" or requested action?
- How likely is it that the donor would want to learn more about the NGO's programs?

5 minutes

5. Repeat steps 2, 3, and 4

Switch roles and repeat the role play. Debrief after each round.

MODULE 3.2

Writing for Sustainability

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

10 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ describe three ways to communicate with donors.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers
- ☐ Handout—*Three Actions to Take Before Writing a Capability Statement*

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

This module helps set the stage for the two that follow. Discuss the differences between the types of essential written statements, then, go on to Modules 3.3 and 3.4.

Say: Making a persuasive case in writing to funders and partners is essential to winning new and ongoing support. The two types of written information most often used by and requested of an NGO, no matter its size, are a capabilities statement and a systems statement.

A **capability statement** is a brief written statement that describes **what you have done,** who you are, what you do, and how you are different from your competitors. It should instill confidence in a potential funder or partner that your organization has the technical, **programmatic experience,** expertise and track record to get results.

A **capacity or systems statement** is a brief written statement that explains **how and how well your organization is managed.** It describes aspects of your management, finance, and monitoring and evaluation systems. It should instill confidence in a potential funder or partner that you have strong **organizational systems** in place to manage money, people and programs.

These two, plus an elevator speech, form a very strong base on which to build proposals, marketing and other materials to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences.

Before diving in to writing, refining and delivering your statements, it is important to define terms. If it is unclear what a funder or partner is requesting, ask for clarification.

Hand out: *Three Actions to Take Before Writing a Capability Statement*

ATTENTION

There are many names for a **capability statement.** Do not be confused! Capability statements are sometimes called:

- Capes or organizational capes
- Capacity statements
- Past performance statements

What we are calling a **systems statement** is often called a capacity statement. For clarity in these modules, we use systems statement.

Three Actions to Take Before Writing a Capability Statement

1 Research your audience

Become as familiar with donors as possible. They are the people reading your proposal and capability statements. Find out:

- What types of projects have they funded in the past and what are they most likely to fund in the future?
- What kind of organizations do they like to fund?
- What size organizations do they usually fund—large international NGOs (INGOs) or do they also directly fund small local NGOs and CBOs?
- How large are their typical projects?
- What types of approaches do they fund?

2 Research your competition

It is important to know which organizations are most likely to apply for the same funding opportunities as your organization. It helps to know their strengths and weaknesses, and how your organization differs from theirs. Be sure to emphasize these unique benefits that your organization offers.

3 Research potential partners

NGOs rarely work in isolation but bid for projects with other partners. Consider how potential partners could strengthen your response and ability to implement the project. This planning step is similar to knowing your competition. You'll want to know potential partners' strengths and weaknesses, how your organization's capes differ from theirs, and what you could bring to the partnership. In other words, what does your organization do that their organization does not? This will help you "sell" your organization as a worthwhile partner for a project. If the donor thinks highly of your organization, that is an important credential that you bring to a partnership with other organizations.

MODULE 3.3

Capability Statements

TOTAL TIME

3 hours 40 minutes

AGENDA

3.3 Capability statements

- **a.** Defining the capability statement (15 minutes)
- **b.** Looking at the elements of a capability statement (35 minutes)
- **c.** Building your capability statement
  - Steps 1-2 (60 minutes)
  - Steps 3-5 (60 minutes)
- **d.** Refining your capability statement (50minutes)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

If sessions are presented as stand-alone workshops, see "Getting Started" at the beginning of the guide.

Introduction

This module is about helping you to communicate more effectively in writing with prospective funders. Like an elevator speech (see Module 3.1), a capability statement tells potential donors what you have done, who you are, what you do, and how you are different from your competitors, but it does so in writing. Winning donor support is highly competitive. NGOs of all sizes are competing with you for a limited pool of donor funds. A clear capability statement is a critical tool in winning support, no matter what size organization you represent. With that in mind, this module will help you:

- identify the reasons a strong capability statement helps you win support from donors,
- identify the key components of a capability statement, and
- create a capability statement that can effectively sell your organization to potential donors.

The exercises begin by defining a few terms and then take you through the process of developing and refining your capability statement. Many of the tools and worksheets used to identify your "niche" (Module 1.3) and to prepare your elevator speech (Module 3.1), can help you prepare capability statements.

ATTENTION

The exercises in this module are designed to build on one another. It is best if the exercises are completed in the order presented.

Handouts are provided at the end of the module.

MODULE 3.3a

What is a Capability Statement?

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

15 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ define what a capability statement is, and
- ✔ describe two ways a capability statement can be used to support fundraising and other efforts to sustain the organization.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Write a definition of a capability statement on a flipchart page and post. Ask one of the participants to read the definition out loud.

Say: A capability statement describes what an organization has done—its program experience and strengths. Let's look at a simple definition.

(Write on a flipchart.)

A capability statement is a brief written description of **what you have done,** who you are, what you do, and how you are different from your competitors.

ATTENTION

There are many names for a capability statement. Do not be confused! Capability statements are sometimes called:

- Capes or organizational capes
- Capacity statements
- Institutional capacity statements
- Past performance statements

If you are unsure what a funder or partner is looking for, ask for clarification.

No matter how you define it, a capability statement should instill confidence in a potential partner or funder that your organization has the technical and programmatic experience, expertise and past successes to get results.

Here are some other ways to think about capability statements:

- A kind of resume or CV for your organization. Just like in a CV or resume, you want to put your best foot forward while also giving a realistic picture of your skills and experience.
- A brief document that markets your organization's experience and skills to position itself for future funding and partnering opportunities.

Ask: Why are capability statements important? *(Choose one or two participants to respond. Write responses on the flipchart. Discuss.)*

(Suggested responses to supplement ideas raised by participants)

- *It "introduces" your organization to a donor or partner in writing.*
- *You have very little time, even in writing to make a good first impression. In a capability statement you want to show that your organization is "capable" of implementing a project and why your organization is "right for the job."*
- *Many donors use capability statements to compare you with other organizations. Many U.S. government agencies (for example, USAID) require that a capability statement be submitted with proposals.*
- *Prime grant recipients can require potential sub-recipients to submit capability statements before deciding to partner with them.*

Ask: How are capability statements used? *(Choose one or two participants to respond. Write responses on the flipchart. Discuss.)*

(Suggested responses to supplement ideas raised by participants)

- *proposals*
- *marketing materials*
- *meeting materials*
- *support of your elevator speech*
- *news releases*

Say: For example, an organization might send its capability statement by email to an organization it would like to partner with on an upcoming project. Staff might also incorporate a capability statement into a fact sheet given to donors and partners at a conference. Organizations often post a capability statement on their website.

Refer to handout.

Three Actions to Take Before Writing a Capability Statement

1 Research your audience

Become as familiar with funders as possible. They are the people reading your proposal and capability statements. Find out:

- What types of projects have they funded in the past and what are they most likely to fund in the future?
- What kind of organizations do they like to fund?

Wrap up

Before you start to write, be sure to do three things:

1. Research your audience.
2. Research your competition.
3. Research your potential partners.

Securing funding or a partner is not unlike getting a job. The more you know about the employer—your target audience—the more you can tailor your CV to compete. The same goes for writing to secure funding or other resources—whether you are writing a cape statement, an elevator speech or a proposal: the more you know, the better your chances of succeeding.

Take a few minutes to review *Three Actions to Take Before Writing a Capability Statement* before going on.

MODULE 3.3b

Looking at the Elements of a Capability Statement

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

35 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ identify the four main components of a capability statement

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers
- ☐ Handouts—**Hope Ethiopia** ***Sample Capability Statement; Elements of a Capability Statement***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

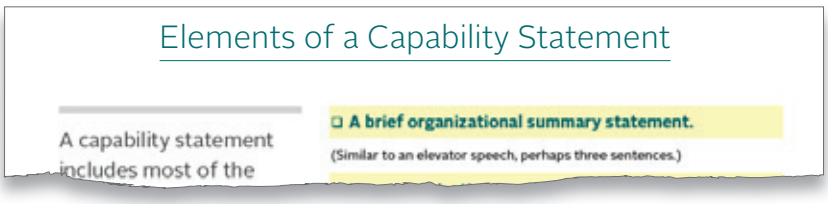
Write each of the components of a capability statement on a flipchart to read loud.

Review what each of the four categories of information includes, referring participants to *Hope Ethiopia*'s sample cape statement. Ask participants to circle the corresponding category. Then, discuss.

Say: What is included in a capability statement? Look at the capability statement for Hope Ethiopia, an imaginary NGO working on HIV and AIDS prevention. What types of information are included?

Hand out: *Hope Ethiopia* sample capability statement; *Elements of a Capability Statement*


Hope Ethiopia
Mobilizing Ethiopians to Combat HIV/AIDS


Elements of a Capability Statement

A capability statement includes most of the

☐ **A brief organizational summary statement.**

(Similar to an elevator speech, perhaps three sentences.)

EXERCISE

Cape detectives

20 minutes

A capability statement should include the following categories of information about your organization:

1. core attributes
2. past performance
3. differentiators
4. contact information/data

Say: We will explore each of these elements using the *Hope Ethiopia* example.

Explain: What are **core attributes?**
They include:
- What you do (draw on language in your mission statement)
- Who you are, when you started
- Where you work (country, region, city; urban, rural)
- Who you work with (the populations you serve)
- Technical expertise

Ask: What are *Hope Ethiopia*'s core attributes? *(Circle and label on the handout or list them.)*

Explain: **Past performance,** what does it include?
- Past and current projects
- Results (outputs) and impact (outcomes) (For example, the number of people you served or reached, the change your program brought about.)
- Past and current partners and funders

Ask: What does *Hope Ethiopia*'s past performance include? (*Circle and label on the handout or list them.)*

Explain: **Differentiators** are what makes your organization different from peers or competitors. Differentiators answer the questions:
- What does our organization do that peers or competitors do not do?
- What skills or expertise does our organization possess that our peers or competitors do not possess?
- How is our organization, staff and/or approach different from others who do what we do?
- What do we offer beneficiaries/clients that peers or competitors do not offer?

Ask: What are *Hope Ethiopia*'s core differentiators? *(Circle and label on the handout or list them.)*

A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit number the U.S. Government requires some organizations to provide as part of their grant applications and proposals. It is assigned free of charge. (See http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform).

Explain: Last, but not least, what **contact information/data** is included?
- The organization's legal name and physical address
- Name of primary contact as well as office telephone, office fax, email address
- Website address, if there is one
- Any relevant codes such as DUNS* number if the organization has one
- Registration status in the country(s) where the organization works

Say: Notice *Hope Ethiopia*'s contact information and data on the capability statement.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Suggest that participants search the Web for sample capability statements using these key words:

- Capability statement
- Capability statement example
- Capability statement template
- NGO capability statement
- HIV AIDS NGO capability statement
- How to write a capability statement

Wrap up

There are many formats you can use to present a capability statement. *Hope Ethiopia*'s is only one example.

Organizations often adapt capability statements to appeal to different funders or partners and to suit different uses—for example, posting on the Web or supporting a proposal.

Before you decide on a format, look at other resources and examples on the Web. Regardless of format or template, the work you did in this module helped you lay the foundation for writing your own capability statement.

Organizations devote a lot of time and thought to developing and refining their capability statements. Next, we will go through the step-by-step process of drafting a capability statement.

MODULE 3.3c

Building your Capability Statement (Steps 1-2)

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

60 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- describe the organization's core attributes and past performances, and
- use these key components in a cape statement.

MATERIALS

- Flipchart, markers
- Handouts—***Capability Statement Worksheet with Examples***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Depending on how many people are gathered, you may want to break the group into two or three. Guide participants through the worksheet one step at a time.

Keep strict time. Ask the group(s) to share their results after each step is completed, then debrief about the process.

EXERCISE

Taking the first steps

40 minutes

Hand out: *Capability Statement Worksheet with Examples*


Capability Statement Worksheet with Examples

Follow the steps to put together the information you will need to write a

STEP 1

Make a list of your organization's **core attributes.**

- What you do (draw on language in your Mission statement)
- Who you are, when you started

Say: In this session you will start developing your own capability statement using the *Capability Statement Worksheet with Examples*. This is a step-by-step process that you will follow until you have all of the building blocks for a complete capability statement.

Before you begin, there are three more things to keep in mind when writing a capability statement. They are called the three Cs. *(Write on flipchart and post.)*

- Concise (brief)
- Convincing (persuasive)
- Connected

Ask: The first two Cs are self-explanatory. What does "connected" mean in the context of a capability statement?

Explain: Connected means that what you tell funders or partners connects with or responds to a need that they have. For example:

- If a donor wants to fund male circumcision projects in your area and you have experience motivating men to participate in family planning, your work with men connects with that donor.
- If an international disaster relief organization wants to make a sub-grant in a remote community affected by drought where you have

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Ask each group to choose a secretary to write responses and a representative to report out.

Move around the room and observe how the drafting is going. Encourage the groups and answer questions. Periodically, announce how much time is left.

Keep strict time. After participants finish each step, ask each group to read what they wrote, point out the similarities and differences.

Be supportive and encourage the participants. This is hard work!

implemented malaria projects, the fact that you have already built relationships in that community **connects** with a need of that relief organization.

Cape statements are most convincing when they are connected to a specific funder or partner. As you complete the cape statement worksheet, do so with a specific funder in mind. It may be USAID, the Global Fund, the Ministry of Health or a local business. Connect what you chose to write with what you know are that funder's concerns.

Step 1. You will have 10 minutes to write down your core attributes. Feel free to refer to Hope Ethiopia's capability statement. Remember, core attributes include:

- Where you work (country, region, cities, rural areas)
- Who you work with (the populations you serve)
- Technical areas
- Impact: number of people you served/reached

For this exercise, leave blanks where you need to confirm specific data, for example number of people served.

Say: Time. What core attributes did you decide to include in your capability statement?

Step 2. You will have 20 minutes to write about your past performance. Feel free to refer to *Hope Ethiopia*'s past performance. Remember, past performance includes:

- Past and current projects
- Results (outputs) and impact (outcomes) (For example, the number of people you served or reached, the change your program brought about.)
- Past and current partners and funders

For this exercise, leave blanks where you need to confirm specific data or information.

Say: Time. What did you say about your past performance? (10 minutes)

Wrap up

Now that you have explored two of the key elements of a capability statement, after a short break, you will gather the remaining building blocks for your cape statement.

BREAK: 10 minutes

MODULE 3.3c

Building your Capability Statement (Steps 3-5)

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

60 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ describe the organization's differentiators (what sets it apart from peers and competitors),
- ✔ combine all of the elements into a rough draft of a capability statement, and
- ✔ understand the DOs and DON'Ts in developing a capability statement that is concise, convincing and connected to a specific funder.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers
- ☐ Handout—***Capability Statement Worksheet***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Participants continue to work on the cape statement.

Say: In this module you will gather the remaining building blocks for your cape statement. As you plan and write, keep in mind the same target audience—funder or partner—you addressed when you described your core attributes and past performance. Remember, cape statements are most compelling when they are connected to a specific funder or partner.

Now you will be answering all of the questions related to your differentiators and contact information on the *Capability Statement Worksheet with Examples.*

Step 3. You will have 20 minutes to write down what differentiates you, that is, what sets you apart from your peers or competitors. Also this may be thought of as your niche (see Module 1.3).

Remember, differentiators answer the questions:

- What does our organization do that peers or competitors do not do?
- What skills or expertise does our organization possess that our peers or competitors do not possess?
- How is our organization, staff and/or approach different from others who do what we do ?
- What do we offer beneficiaries/clients that peers or competitors do not offer?

Feel free to leave blanks where you need to confirm specific information.

Say: Time. What differentiators did you decide to include in your capability statement? (15 minutes)

Steps 4 and 5. On your worksheet, fill in the contact information for the person who will be responsible for communicating with the target audience you chose for this cape statement. Then, write two to three sentences that summarize what you've written. These will become the **introduction** to your organization's capability statement.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Ask each group to choose a secretary to write responses and a representative to report out.

Move around the room and observe how the drafting is going. Encourage the groups and answer questions. Periodically, announce how much time is left.

Keep strict time. After participants finish each step, ask each group to read what they wrote, point out the similarities and differences.

If the participants have developed an Elevator Speech (Module 3.1), suggest they refer to it as a starting point for their introduction.

Discuss with the group their plans to finalize the capability statement. Remind them to create an action plan with tasks, timeline and person(s) responsible.

If you have an elevator speech, adapt it for this purpose. If not, review all of the information on this worksheet and boil it down to two or three short, informative sentences that answers the questions WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHAT IS UNIQUE about your organization.

Do not worry about being perfect. This is a first draft that will be revised many times to respond to specific needs and audiences.

Your will have 20 minutes to complete steps 4 and 5.

Say: Time. Pens down. Review your entire worksheet.

Debrief: *Ask the group a few questions about the process they just completed.*

- *How did you find the exercise—easy or difficult?*
- *Were you successful? What does that mean?*
- *To what extent did the step-by-step process make you more likely to customize capability statements to connect with different audiences?*

Wrap up

Developing a capability statement is hard work. Most organizations do not develop a capability statement in one hour or even one day. Successful organizations put time and effort into their marketing materials and particularly the capability statement. A strong capability statement is essential to support your efforts to mobilize resources to sustain your organization and programs.

MODULE 3.3d

Refining your Capability Statement

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

50 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ improve their capability statement to market to a specific donor or partner, and
- ✔ adapt a capability statement for a proposal.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Handouts—***Capability Statement Summary, Capability Statement Assessment, Four Ways to Refine Your Capes for a Proposal, Cape Template***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Move around the room and observe how the drafting is going. Encourage the groups and answer questions. Periodically, announce how much time is left.

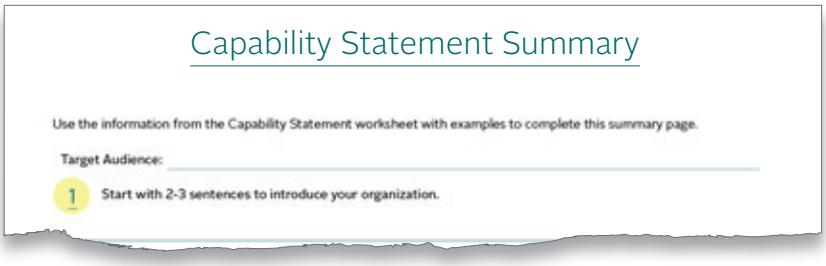
Keep strict time. After 30 minutes, bring all the participants together to read and discuss their summary cape statements.

Say: Just as you create a general CV or resume for yourself, you create a general capability statement for your organization or program. It is important to have a general capability statement for marketing purposes. This is the statement that you can post on your website and distribute at conferences. It should show the range and types of experience and expertise that your organization possesses.

EXERCISE

Putting it all together

Hand out: *Capability Statement Summary* (blank)


Capability Statement Summary

Use the information from the Capability Statement worksheet with examples to complete this summary page.

Target Audience: _____

1 Start with 2-3 sentences to introduce your organization.

Say: In this session you will create a general cape statement you can use to market your organization to prospective partners and funders.

You will have 30 minutes to use the information you entered into the worksheet to write a concise, convincing and connected capability summary.

Here are some tips to get started.

1. Do not try to include everything.
2. Turn your lists into a few short, clear sentences about each component. Follow sentences with bullet points, if appropriate.
3. Select projects that have demonstrated results (outputs) or impact (outcomes). Show how your work benefits those you serve.

4. Choose and use the most powerful words and phrases you wrote on your worksheet.
5. Tell how your services/skills stand out from peers or competitors

Say: Time. Let's share our drafts. Who will start off by reading their summary statement? *(Discuss)*

(Possible questions to supplement discussion.)

- *What was difficult?*
- *Did the worksheet and examples help?*
- *Was there additional information you wanted to mention? What and why?*

EXERCISE

Rate the capes

Hand out: *Capability Statement Assessment*

Capability Statement Assessment

Answer YES or NO to each of the following questions.

1. Is your capability statement concise, avoiding long paragraphs and run-on sentences? ❑ YES ❑ NO
2. Do you use clear active language and declarative sentences? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Say: Use the *Capability Statement Assessment* to see the strengths and gaps in your cape summary statement. Take 5 minutes to rate your capes.

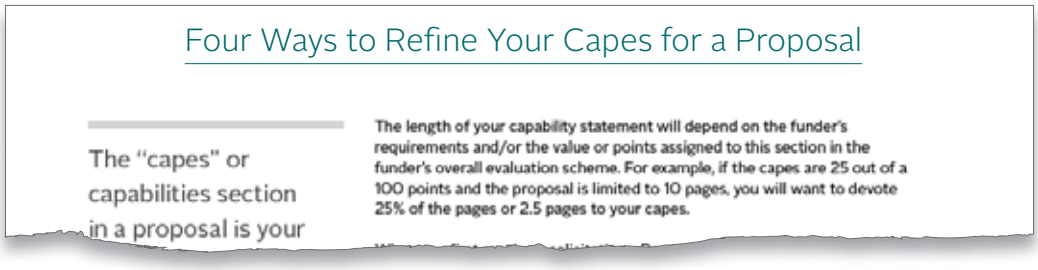
After five minutes, call time.

Ask: How did you do? What do need to work on most?

Do not worry if you answered "No" to many of the questions on the assessment. This is a first draft. The next step is to work on turning each "No" into a "Yes".

If donors will not read your capes because they are too dense, or if they misinterpret what you wrote because you were too technical, too vague or too flowery, you have not communicated successfully. Creating convincing capability statements is a process of writing and editing and re-writing.

Hand out: *Four Ways to Refine Your Capes for a Proposal* and *Capability Statement Template*



Four Ways to Refine Your Capes for a Proposal

The "capes" or capabilities section in a proposal is your

The length of your capability statement will depend on the funder's requirements and/or the value or points assigned to this section in the funder's overall evaluation scheme. For example, if the capes are 25 out of a 100 points and the proposal is limited to 10 pages, you will want to devote 25% of the pages or 2.5 pages to your capes.

Capability Statement Template

Logo

Name of Organization

This is a CONTENT template, not a design template. Add color and graphic elements!

Review and discuss *Four Ways to Refine Your Capes for a Proposal.*

Wrap up

In this module, we have discussed and developed a capability statement for marketing your organization to potential donors and partners. We have also practiced refining the capability statement for specific donors. Your general capability statement is one that you will distribute even before funders issue a Request for Application (RFA) or Request for Proposal (RFP). A funder needs to know who you are, what you do, and how you are different from your peers and competitors, before ever reading a proposal.

By developing a capability statement now, when you are ready to apply for specific funds, you can easily adapt your capability statement to suit the proposal.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Adapting your Cape Statement and the accompanying exercise is optional. Determine whether or not to conduct this exercise based on how well participants did drafting cape statements.

OPTIONAL: Adapting your cape statement

Say: Successful organizations have many versions of their capability statement on file in order to be prepared to respond to different potential donors, partners and funding opportunities.

Explain: Developing a capability statement does not take place in isolation. After reading a Request for Application (RFA) or Request for Proposal (RFP) very carefully and before putting pen to paper:

- Research your target audience (funder)
- Research your competition
- Research potential partners

(Refer participants to handout: Three Actions to Take Before Writing a Capability Statement*)*

Ask participants to return to their original groups for this final exercise.

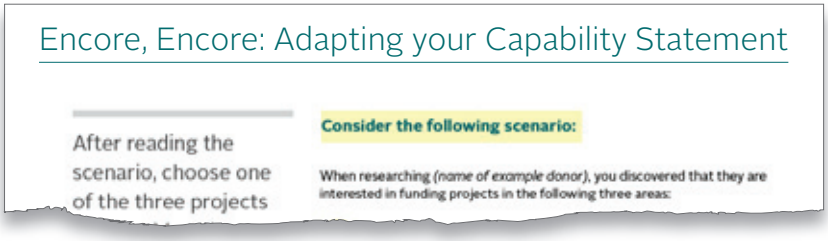
FACILITATOR'S NOTE

The following examples were developed for those working in the HIV/AIDS and health sector. If they are not appropriate for the participants, develop alternatives that fit their sector or ask participants to identify a new funding area that they are interested in exploring.

EXERCISE

Encore, Encore: Adapting your cape statement

Hand out: *Encore, Encore: Adapting your Capability Statement*


Encore, Encore: Adapting your Capability Statement

After reading the scenario, choose one of the three projects

Consider the following scenario:

When researching *(name of example donor)*, you discovered that they are interested in funding projects in the following three areas:

Say: Consider the following scenario:

When researching *(name of example donor)*, you discovered that they are interested in funding projects in the following three areas:

1. Donor is interested in funding a community-based project to screen for and monitor diabetes that has recently increased in prevalence. The project will employ a home-based care model in both an urban and rural area of your country. Your organization has experience in the urban area but not in the specific rural community that the donor has identified.
2. Donor is interested in funding an alcohol and drug abuse prevention program with both in-school and out-of-school youth in urban and rural areas where you have experience. Project will include behavior change communications (BCC), peer counseling and family-based model.
3. Donor is interested in funding male circumcision (MC) projects nationally. The elements of the program are not yet defined but the donor is concerned with a lack of policy support at the national level for MC and lack of health care workers trained in MC.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Ask the participants to return to the full group after 15 minutes. Have one participant from each group read their core competencies one by one. Ask the group to evaluate each core competency. Is it concise, compelling and connected? Is the group convinced that the organization can take on this new project? Why or why not?

After reading the scenarios, choose one of the three projects you would apply for. Adapt the core competencies, past performance or other elements in your capability statement to position your organization to win that grant. You will have 15 minutes. Have fun!

When you are writing, think about:

- How can you market your organization to convince the donor that your experience can be applied to this new project?
- What skills are transferrable from your past projects to this new project?
- What experience can you cite to your advantage? Is it the beneficiaries, an approach, the geographic area in which you have experience?

Wrap up

We have practiced refining descriptions of past performance for the capability statement. You will also need to refine your differentiators and your summary statement so they are tailored to each donor and potential funding opportunity. Remember, if you are refining your capability statement for another organization you want to partner with in the future, you must highlight how you complement that organization.

Hope Ethiopia

Mobilizing Ethiopians to Combat HIV/AIDS

Hope Ethiopia was among the first local organizations to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia by engaging the most valuable resource in communities—the people. Since 1996, Hope Ethiopia's programming has centered around spreading HIV awareness/prevention and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) messaging and providing voluntary counseling and testing services (VCT), with a special focus on engaging men. Hope Ethiopia works primarily in the rural regions of Oromia and Amhara, with some activities in Addis Ababa.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **Sub-granting:** Sub-granted $890,000 to 41 local NGOs providing VCT and prevention services from June 2008 to March 2012.
- **Training:** Trained 560 promoters in providing HIV prevention messaging, 330 health educators in mother-to-child HIV transmission education, and 120 clinical staff in performing male circumcisions.
- **Capacity-building:** Strengthened institutional capacity of sub-grantees and their partners in areas of operations, financial management and monitoring and evaluation, and facilitated linkages between sub-grantees to create support networks.
- **Community mobilization:** Created networks of HIV+ women in local communities to promote PMTCT messaging and provide peer support.
- **Male involvement:** Provided male-focused HIV/AIDS education sessions for 790,000 men since February 2006.

PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

- USAID—New Partners Initiative Grantee
- Ethiopian Ministry of Health—HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control Office
- Catholic Relief Services
- PACT
- Stephen Lewis Foundation
- IntraHealth
- Women AID Ethiopia

OUR APPROACH

- Focus on working in rural, resource-limited areas.
- Engage local cultural institutions, including traditional male leadership, in HIV prevention activities.
- Implement innovative, easily replicable & sustainable peer education program model.
- Enlist community participation through local community and faith-based organizations and community-led support networks.

Hope Ethiopia | Bole Road, Dasset Building near Brass MCH Hospital | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
+251-0911-517-872 | hopeethiopia@yahoo.com
Registered NGO in Ethiopia

Elements of a Capability Statement

A capability statement includes most of the listed information. Its length will vary depending on the purpose (proposal, brochure, Web posting). It is important to be concise. A full cape statement should range from 1 to 2 pages.

❑ A brief organizational summary statement.

(Similar to an elevator speech, perhaps three sentences.)

❑ Your organization's core attributes.

- What you do (draw on language in your mission statement)
- Who you are, when you started
- Where you work (country, region, city; urban, rural)
- Who you serve (the specific populations)
- Technical expertise

❑ Your organization's past performance.

Briefly describe past and current projects relevant to the purpose and target audience. Do not just say you have been doing something for 15 years, give specific examples of:

- What you did
- When you did it
- How you did it
- Why it mattered then
- Why it matters now
- What were the results (outputs) and impact (outcomes) (For example, the number of people you served or reached, the change your program brought about.)
- Name past and current partners and funders

❑ Your organization's differentiators

Describe what makes your organization different from peers or competitors.

- What your organization does that peers or competitors do not
- What skills or expertise your organization possess that your peers or competitors do not
- How your organization, staff and/or approach differs from that of your peers or competitors
- What do you offer beneficiaries/clients that peers or competitors do not

❑ Your organization's contact information/data.

- The organization's legal name and physical address
- Name of primary contact as well as office telephone, office fax, email address
- Website address, if there is one
- Any relevant codes such as DUNS* number if the organization has one
- Registration status in the country(s) where the organization works

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A *DUNS number is a unique nine-digit number the U.S. Government requires some organizations to provide as part of their grant applications and proposals. It is assigned free of charge. (See http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform).

Capability Statement Worksheet with Examples

Follow the steps to put together the information you will need to write a capability statement for your organization. Refer to the examples to give you ideas for the kind of information you want to highlight about your organization. Do not be limited by the examples.

STEP 1

Make a list of your organization's **core attributes.**

- What you do (draw on language in your mission statement)
- Who you are, when you started
- Where you work (country, region, city; urban, rural)
- Who you work with (the populations you serve)
- Technical expertise

STEP 2

List your organization's past funding and projects—your organization's **"past performance."**

EXAMPLES FROM *HOPE ETHIOPIA:*
Note the bold-faced print in each of these example sentences. These are headings an organization might use to highlight specific capabilities they want to promote.

- SUB-GRANTING: Sub-granted $890,000 to 41 local NGOs providing VCT and prevention services from June 2008 to March 2012.
- TRAINING: Trained 560 promoters in providing HIV prevention messaging, 330 health educators in mother-to-child HIV transmission education, and 120 clinical staff in performing male circumcisions.
- CAPACITY-BUILDING: Strengthened institutional capacity of sub-grantees and their partners in areas of operations, financial management and monitoring and evaluation, and facilitated linkages between sub-grantees to create support networks.
- COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION: Created networks of HIV+ women in local communities to promote PMTCT messaging and provide peer support.
- MALE INVOLVEMENT: Provided male-focused HIV/AIDS education sessions for 790,000 men since February 2006.

STEP 3

What is unique about your approach, experience or skills—your organization's **"differentiators"**? What makes your organization stand out from peers or competitors?

EXAMPLES FROM *HOPE ETHIOPIA:*

- Focus on working in rural, resource-limited areas.
- Engage local cultural institutions, including traditional male leadership, in HIV prevention activities.
- Implement innovative, easily replicable & sustainable peer education program model.
- Enlist community participation through local community and faith-based organizations and community-led support networks.

STEP 4

Fill in your organization's **contact information and other data.**

Logo:

Contact name and email:

Phone:

Fax:

Address:

Website:

Corporate Data:

Any relevant codes (DUNS number)/Local registration status

STEP 5

Write a summary statement. These 2–3 sentences will become the introduction to your organization's capability statement.

If you have an elevator speech, adapt it for this purpose. If not, review all of the information on this worksheet and boil it down to two or three short, informative sentences that answers the questions WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHAT IS UNIQUE about your organization.

EXAMPLES FROM *HOPE ETHIOPIA:*

> Hope Ethiopia was among the first local organizations to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia. Since 1996, Hope Ethiopia's programming has centered around spreading HIV awareness/prevention and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) messaging and providing voluntary counseling and testing services (VCT), with a special focus on engaging men. Hope Ethiopia works primarily in the rural regions of Oromia and Amhara, with some activities in Addis Ababa.

Capability Statement Summary

Use the information from the Capability Statement worksheet with examples to complete this summary page.

Target Audience: _____

1 Start with 2-3 sentences to introduce your organization.

_____

_____

2 Describe your organization's core attributes.

_____

_____

3 Describe your past performance, including funders and partners.

_____

_____

4 Describe what is unique about your approach, experience, skills—what differentiates your organization from peers or competitors.

_____

_____

5 Fill in your organization's contact information and other relevant data.

Logo: _____

Contact name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

Website: _____

Corporate Data: _____

Any relevant codes (DUNS number) / Local registration status

Capability Statement Assessment

Answer YES or NO to each of the following questions.

1.	Is your capability statement concise, avoiding long paragraphs and run-on sentences?	❑ YES	❑ NO
2.	Do you use clear active language and declarative sentences?	❑ YES	❑ NO
3.	Do you avoid passive voice? (Passive voice avoids mentioning the subject of the sentence, and sounds vague and unclear. Instead of writing "peer counseling was done by volunteers", say "volunteers served as peer counselors.")	❑ YES	❑ NO
4.	Do you avoid unnecessary adjectives (such as excellent, strong, exceptional)	❑ YES	❑ NO
5.	Do you avoid jargon?	❑ YES	❑ NO
6.	Do you avoid vague language (such as empower, support—what do these mean)?	❑ YES	❑ NO
7.	Do you emphasize your projects' results and client feedback wherever possible?	❑ YES	❑ NO
8.	Do you avoid making claims you cannot prove?	❑ YES	❑ NO
9.	Do you avoid exaggerating or misleading the reader? Tell the truth!	❑ YES	❑ NO
10.	Do you give examples of:		
	• What you did?	❑ YES	❑ NO
	• When you did it?	❑ YES	❑ NO
	• Why it mattered then?	❑ YES	❑ NO
	• Why it matters now?	❑ YES	❑ NO
11.	Is your capability statement convincing? Is it memorable? Does it stand out?	❑ YES	❑ NO
12.	Will the reader care?	❑ YES	❑ NO
13.	Are you demonstrating actual capabilities by talking about activities?	❑ YES	❑ NO
14.	Do you make clear connections for the reader?	❑ YES	❑ NO
15.	Do your differentiators provide a particular benefit to those you serve?	❑ YES	❑ NO
16.	Does your past performance instill confidence that you can get the job done?	❑ YES	❑ NO
17.	Can your past performance and differentiators serve as a foundation to expand your scope and reach?	❑ YES	❑ NO
18.	Is it clear how your services/skills stand out from peers or competitors?	❑ YES	❑ NO
19.	Is it clear what positive benefits your organization offers that others do not?	❑ YES	❑ NO
20.	Does your capability statement create a sense of trust and show that your organization is capable? Does it tell a donor why they should trust you to implement projects with their funding?	❑ YES	❑ NO

If you cannot answer YES to all these questions, go back and refine your capability statement!

Four Ways to Refine Your Capes for a Proposal

The "capes" or capabilities section in a proposal is your organization's chance to communicate why and how your organization can successfully carry out the proposed activity.

The length of your capability statement will depend on the funder's requirements and/or the value or points assigned to this section in the funder's overall evaluation scheme. For example, if the capes are 25 out of a 100 points and the proposal is limited to 10 pages, you may want to devote 25% of the pages or 2.5 pages to your capes.

When you first receive a solicitation—Request for Application (RFA) or Request for Proposal (RFP):

1 Read it very carefully and ask yourself:

a. What is the proposal about?
b. Is the work requested consistent with our Mission?

2 Create an outline of your proposal based on the requirements of the solicitation

For the capes section, ask:

- How does this project relate to our experience and past successes?
- What do we need to demonstrate to be competitive?
- What data and information do we need?
- What is the point value of this section?

3 Talk to your staff members.

Ask them:

a. What projects have we done that are similar to the proposed project? Think about
   - Technical areas (for example HIV/AIDS prevention, home-based care)
   - Geographic area served (country, region, province, city, village)
   - Approaches (for example, peer counseling, motivating male involvement)
   - Populations served (for example, homeless youth, pregnant women)
b. What past proposals have we submitted on similar work?
   - Use past proposals as a starting point, but ALWAYS update capes statements so they are tailored to each new proposal. Clearly connect your capes to the proposed project's goals. (Do NOT cut and paste from old proposals.)
c. Who are the "go-to" people in your organization for this type of work?

4 Differentiate your organization from others that might compete.

Describe what your organization can add to this project that others cannot.

Capability Statement Template

Logo

Name of Organization

Capability Statement

Call this document a Capability Statement

This is a CONTENT template, not a design template. Add color and graphic elements!

Summary Statement

No more than three sentences. If you have an elevator speech, adapt it.

Core attributes

Add any specific information about who you are, what you do and who you serve that is missing from your summary statement. If the summary statement covers everything, skip this.

Past Performance

Describe past and current projects that are tailored to the funder's mission, problem they are interested in solving or specific opportunity.

Differentiators

Describe what makes your organization different from peers or competitors and how this benefits the targeted funder.

Partners

List past and current partners and funders. If there are too many partners to fit, prioritize based on intended audience for this cape statement.

Funders

List past and current funders. If there are too many funders to fit, prioritize based on intended audience for this cape statement. If requested, provide contact information.

Address, phone numbers (voice, mobile and fax) email, web site and other related contact information

Encore, Encore: Adapting your Capability Statement

After reading the scenario, choose one of the three projects you would apply for. Adapt the core competencies, past performance or other elements in your capability statement to position your organization to win that grant. You will have 15 minutes. Have fun!

Consider the following scenario:

When researching *(name of example donor)*, you discovered that they are interested in funding projects in the following three areas:

1. Donor is interested in funding a community-based project to screen for and monitor diabetes that has recently increased in prevalence. The project will employ a home-based care model in both an urban and rural area of your country. Your organization has experience in the urban area but not in the specific rural community that the donor has identified.

2. Donor is interested in funding an alcohol and drug abuse prevention program with both in-school and out-of-school youth in urban and rural areas where you have experience. Project will include behavior change communications (BCC), peer counseling and family based model.

3. Donor is interested in funding male circumcision (MC) projects nationally. The elements of the program are not yet defined but the donor is concerned with a lack of policy support at the national level for MC and lack of health care workers trained in MC.

When you are writing, think about:

- How can you market your organization to convince the donor that your experience can be applied to this new project?
- What skills are transferrable from your past projects to this new project?
- What experience can you cite to your advantage? Is it the beneficiaries, an approach, the geographic area in which you have experience?

MODULE 3.4

Systems (Capacity) Statements

TOTAL TIME

2 hours 30 minutes

AGENDA

3.4 Systems (Capacity) Statements

- **a.** Defining the systems statement (15 minutes)
- **b.** Exploring the elements of a systems statement (15 minutes)
- **c.** Developing your systems statement (30 minutes)
- **d.** Refining your systems statement (90 minutes)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Before you start, review *Module 3.2: Writing for Sustainability* to set the context for what follows.

If sessions are presented as stand-alone workshops, see "Getting Started" at the beginning of the guide.

Introduction

This module focuses on an important tool for helping you make your case with prospective funders. Most often called a capacity statement, it is a written description of how you support what you do. Because it describes the systems you use to achieve your organizational or program objectives, and to avoid confusing capacity with capability statements (see Module 3.2), we will refer to systems statements throughout this Module. With that in mind, this module will help you:

- identify the reasons a strong systems statement helps you win support from donors,
- identify the key components of a systems statement, and
- create a systems statement that can effectively sell your organization to potential donors.

If you have conducted an organizational capacity assessment (OCA) and/or done strategic planning, revisit your findings. These results will tell you about your organization's strengths and provide a basis for writing your systems statement.

If you have not done an OCA, you can still write a capacity statement. To learn why and how to conduct an OCA, go to www.npi-connect.net/resources/npiguide.

The exercises begin by defining a few terms and then take you through the process of writing and refining a systems statement. By following the steps outlined in this module you will be able to draft a strong systems statement to support your organization's resource mobilization efforts.

ATTENTION

The exercises in this module are designed to build on one another. It is best if the exercises are completed in the order presented.

Handouts are provided at the end of the module.

MODULE 3.4a

What is a Systems (Capacity) Statement?

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

15 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- describe what a systems statement is,
- understand the difference between a systems statement and a capability statement, and
- explain why a systems statement is important and how it supports fundraising efforts.

MATERIALS

- Flipchart, markers, tape
- Prepare and post flipchart page: ***Definitions of Capacity (Systems) and Capability Statements***

Say: Capacity or systems statements assure potential donors and partners about the strength of your organization's systems. They answer the questions: Is your organization well managed? Is your organization able to report on funds? How strong is your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system?

Potential donors or partners often want to know the answers to these questions before they will trust you with funds or form a partnership. Your programs may be well regarded, but donors want to be sure that your internal systems are strong enough to sustain your programs. Systems statements are especially critical for small organizations that might not be well known to donors and partners.

In addition, many donor solicitations, for example, a request for application (RFA), specifically ask for a one-paragraph description of the organization's management structure, financial reporting, and M&E system. By developing these statements in advance, you will have them available for marketing purposes and for future proposals.

Ask: What is the difference between a capability statement and a systems (capacity) statement?

(Call on one or two participants. Jot down the basic definitions on a flipchart page and post it on the wall as a reference for the module.)

Say: In general, a capability statement refers to an organization's program experience and strengths. A systems statement refers to **how and how well an organization is managed.** A systems statement might also be called a capacity statement. But for this module, to avoid confusion, we will use the term systems statement.

Post the following definitions:

A **capacity** or systems statement describes **how** and **how well** your organization is **managed.**

A **capability** statement describes **what** an organization does, its **program experience** and **strengths.**

Wrap up

Next, we will go through a step-by-step process to help you write a systems statement.

MODULE 3.4b

Exploring the Elements of a Systems Statement

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

15 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ identify the essential elements of a systems statement and
- ✔ understand how to apply a systems statement to their organization.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers
- ☐ Handout—***Elements of a Systems (Capacity) Statement***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Refer to the definitions to answer questions about what funders typically mean by governance, management, financial and M&E systems.

Say: A systems statement should be no more than one-page. Ideally, the page should have three short paragraphs that describe your organization's:

1. governance and management structure.
2. financial management system.
3. monitoring and evaluation system.

Ask: How would you describe your organization's management structure or another important part of your operations? *(Call on a participant.)*

Say: It is not unusual for this to be harder than speaking about your programs and mission. Yet, it is very important because donors and partners want to support and work with organizations that are accountable and efficient as well as effective.

What sets you apart from other organizations competing for the same donor funds may be, for example, the strength of your financial management and reporting systems. Moreover, a written description of your systems can grab a donor's attention and instill confidence that you are a serious organization. Even if your systems are not yet perfect, openness and an honest assessment of your systems will help to win trust and confidence from funders and partners.

A systems statement can include the following elements:

- Number of relevant staff
- Experience and training of relevant staff
- Written policies and manuals related to the organization's systems
- Established structures and routines to manage day-to-day operations (for example, a time card system, formal procurement, expense and reimbursement procedures, and so on)
- Proof that a system is functioning (for example, a strong financial management system that is regularly audited and facilitates submission of timely reports to donors)

DEFINITIONS

Financial Management involves planning, organizing, controlling and monitoring financial resources to support the objectives and functioning of an organization. Good financial management requires more than simply keeping accurate accounting records. Many NGOs may have only an accounting or bookkeeping system rather than a financial management system. Accounting is a subset of financial management. A financial management system encompasses both administrative systems and accounting systems.

- **Administrative systems** provide the framework for handling procurement, travel, inventory, facilities and personnel matters such as payroll and benefits.
- **Accounting systems** encompass the methods, procedures and controls established to gather, record, classify, analyze, summarize, interpret and present accurate and timely financial data.

Governance refers to the systems and processes needed to ensure the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization. This is typically the responsibility of the Board of Directors (Board) who make the policies that the executive director and staff carry out day to day.

- **By-laws** are the rules governing the operation of a nonprofit corporation. By-laws often also provide the methods for selecting the Board of Directors, creating Board committees and conducting meetings.

Management takes direction from and reports to the Board and is responsible for directing the day-to-day operations of an organization, including implementing policies and programs.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) encompasses the process of collecting and analyzing data and information for the purpose of identifying and measuring a project's impact.

- Technical assistance (TA) sought and received to strengthen the organization's systems
- Relevant software/technology in place to support the organization's systems

Ask: What are key organizational domains and systems that support your ability to fulfill your mission? *(Write down answers. Add any of the following that may have been missed.)*

Governance (Board of Directors)

- *By-laws*

Management (Leadership, structure)

- *Number of relevant staff*
- *Experience and training of relevant staff*
- *Written policies and manuals related to the organization's systems*
- *Established structures and routines to manage day-to-day operations*

Financial Management

- *Written policies and standards for procurement, travel, expenses, reimbursement; timecard system*
- *Proof that a system is functioning (For example, a strong financial management system that is regularly audited and facilitates submission of timely reports to donors)*
- *Relevant software/technology in place to support the organization's systems (For example, QuickBooks™)*

Monitoring & Evaluation

- *Systems for gathering data, assuring its quality, and analyzing it*

Hand out: *Elements of a Systems (Capacity) Statement*

(Review the definitions to reinforce key concepts.)

Elements of a Systems (Capacity) Statement

A capacity or **systems** statement describes

Systems statements answer the questions: Is your organization well managed? Is your organization able to report on funds? How reliable is your monitoring and evaluation system? Potential donors or partners often want to know the answers to these questions before they will entrust an NGO with funds or form a partnership. Your programs may be well regarded, but

Wrap up

(Remind participants to tell the target audience about other key domains where they are strong, such as human resources and/or external relations, promotion, marketing, or resource mobilization.)

If you have conducted an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) and/or done strategic planning, revisit your findings. These results will tell you about your organization's strengths and provide a basis for writing your systems statement.

MODULE 3.4c

Developing your Systems Statement

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

30 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ answer key questions needed to write a systems statement, and
- ✔ understand the process for how to develop a systems statement.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers
- ☐ Handout—***Activists for Hope: Governance Systems (Capacity) Statement***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

If the organization does not have a Board of Directors, refer to the *Activists for Hope* sample answers handout.

Say: It is one thing to know the facts about your organization. It is another to try to write them down in a brief paragraph. Writing is a challenge. Answers to the following questions will give you a good start. An important component of an organization's governance structure is its Board of Directors. Answer the questions about your Board. *(Show questions on flipchart or handout.)*

Describe your organization's governance structure

1. Do you have a Board of Directors?
2. How many members are on your Board?
3. Where is your Board located?
4. Who is on your Board? Does your Board represent a diverse cross-section of the community?
5. How often does your Board meet?
6. Does your Board operate according to written by-laws?
7. What is the role of your Board?

Say: The overall direction and accountability of an organization are the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

Let's start with question 1: "Do you have a Board of Directors"? Please respond with a full sentence as these answers will serve as building blocks for your systems statement. For example, say either "Yes, we have a Board of Directors" or "No, we do not have a Board of Directors."

Ask each of the seven questions. Require the answers to be a complete sentence. After all questions have been answered, hand out the governance structure section from Activists for Hope: Sample Answers.

Say: Let's review the answers given by *Activists for Hope (AFH),* an imaginary organization working in HIV and AIDS in Botswana. Looking at *Activists for Hope*'s answers, is there anything you want to modify about your answers?

Hand out: *Activists for Hope: Governance Systems (Capacity) Statement*

Activists for Hope: Governance Systems (Capacity) Statement

Activists for Hope **is an imaginary organization working in HIV and AIDS in Botswana.**

To prepare their systems statement, first, they began by answering the

Say: Now, look at AFH and your responses. Work with a partner to combine your information to form **two** short, but informative, sentences about how your organization is governed. In other words, take the information in those seven sentences about your Board and form just two sentences. You will have 5 minutes. Do not include everything. Do not use jargon.

Say: Time. Will someone read his or her two sentences out loud? *(Let all who want to read their sentences out loud do so.)*

Here is how *Activists for Hope* combined its information into two sentences. *(Show prepared flipchart.)*

Activists for Hope's Systems Statement About Its Board

Based in Gaborone, Botswana, our nine-member Board of Directors represents a spectrum of community stakeholders, including the head of a local bank, a school principal, a health worker, and a business owner. As required in our Board's by-laws, they meet every quarter to provide close oversight of our organization's management and activities.

Ask: Do these two statements inspire confidence that *Activists for Hope* has a strong and functioning Board? Why or why not? What do the two sentences tell you about *AFH?*

(Supplement participants' responses.)

Say: These two sentences communicate to a donor or partner the following information:

- *Activists for Hope* has a functioning Board.
- *Activists for Hope* understands the importance of a diverse Board that represents many elements of the community.
- *Activists for Hope* has a Board with a solid number of members (not too many, not too few).
- The Board of Directors meets regularly (every three months).
- *Activists for Hope* both understands the importance of by-laws and that they have written ones.
- *Activists for Hope* understands the role of the Board of Directors (that they provide oversight—they do NOT manage day-to-day operations).

That is a lot of information in just two sentences!

Wrap up

Now that we have read *Activists for Hope*'s two sentences about its Board, review your two sentences. Can you make yours more concise? If they are too long, can you shorten them but still make a strong point? Take 2 minutes to review and revise your two sentences.

This is the step-by-step process that we will follow until you have built a complete systems statement. It is like a puzzle—you take small pieces of information and combine until you produce a complete picture.

BREAK: 10 minutes

MODULE 3.4d

Refining Your Systems Statement

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

90 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ identify key information about each organizational domain for a systems statement,
- ✔ develop a draft system statement for three organizational domains, and
- ✔ develop an Action plan for finalizing the organizational system statement.

MATERIALS

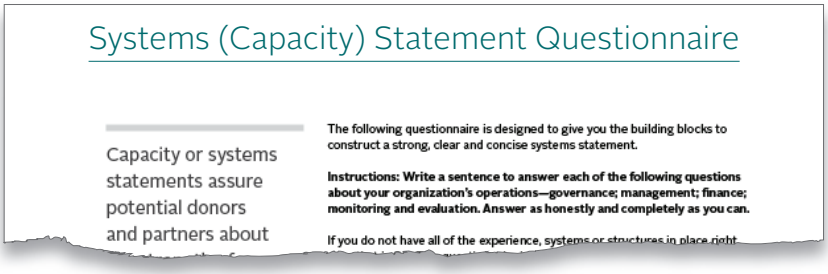
- ☐ Handouts—***Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire;*** **Activists for Hope:** ***Sample Answers;*** **Activists for Hope** ***Sample Systems Statements***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Depending on how many people are gathered, you may want to divide the participants into groups of two or three.

Say: It may take some time to compose all three paragraphs but these initial sentences will serve as the building blocks for your systems statements.

Hand out: *Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire*



Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire

Capacity or systems statements assure potential donors and partners about

The following questionnaire is designed to give you the building blocks to construct a strong, clear and concise systems statement.

Instructions: Write a sentence to answer each of the following questions about your organization's operations—governance; management; finance; monitoring and evaluation. Answer as honestly and completely as you can.

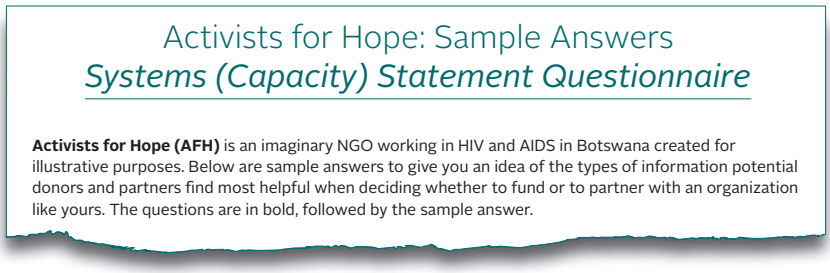
If you do not have all of the experience, systems or structures in place right

EXERCISE

Complete the Questionnaire

Take 15 minutes to answer questions that will help you write short systems statements about your management structure, financial management, and M&E systems. Try your best to answer the questions for your section. Do not worry if you do not have all the answers now or if you make mistakes—just do your best.

Hand out: Activists for Hope: *Sample Answers*



Activists for Hope: Sample Answers

Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire

Activists for Hope (AFH) is an imaginary NGO working in HIV and AIDS in Botswana created for illustrative purposes. Below are sample answers to give you an idea of the types of information potential donors and partners find most helpful when deciding whether to fund or to partner with an organization like yours. The questions are in bold, followed by the sample answer.

Say: After you have answered all the questions for your section, look at the *Activists for Hope* sample answers handout. Is there anything that you want to change or add based on the

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Ask each group to choose a secretary to write responses and a representative to report out.

Move around the room and observe how the writing is going. Encourage the groups and answer questions. Periodically, announce how much time is left.

After 20 minutes bring all the participants back to discuss and debrief.

Activists for Hope sample answers? Take 5 minutes to review and revise your answers.

Debrief: *Ask the following questions:*

- *How was that exercise?*
- *Was it difficult or easy to answer the questions?*
- *Were there additional questions that you thought should be included?*

Ask participants to read their 'Governance and Management Structure" answers out loud. Discuss.

EXERCISE

Write, review, and revise

Say: Use your answer sentences as the basis for writing a full paragraph, combining as much of the information as you think is important. You cannot include everything! Paragraphs should be no more than 150 words. Remember, describe what you believe will be of most interest to a potential funder or partner.

You will probably write and revise your systems statement many times. Here is a process for writing and revising:

Once you answer the questionnaire:

1. Write a few sentences about each area.
2. Connect one sentence to another to make them flow naturally into a paragraph.
3. Review what you wrote and circle the clearest, most powerful words and/or phrases.
4. Tighten and clean up your language. Change any long words or jargon into everyday language. Do all of the ideas in the statement make sense? Are there unclear or confusing ideas or sentences?
5. Do you see any problems with grammar, punctuation, or spelling? If you think something is wrong, you should make a note of it, even if you do not know how to fix it. Talk to a colleague about how to correct any errors.
6. Read each paragraph out loud to yourself and edit again, cutting out any unnecessary words, but keeping the elements you circled.
7. Repeat step 6 again, pretending that you are reviewing someone else's work. Repeat this process until you are satisfied that you have been accurate and clear, and that no one paragraph is more than 150 words.

You will have 20 minutes to complete the exercise.

Say: Time. Let's share our drafts. Who will start off by reading the paragraph on Governance and Management?

Debrief: *Ask the following questions after each presentation.*

- *What words or phrases did you hear that worked?*
- *What did you hear that did not work or was confusing?*
- *What was missing?*
- *What could make it better?*

Repeat for the financial management and M&E statements. Be positive and praise something in each statement. What was difficult about writing these paragraphs? Did the sample questions help? Was there additional information that you thought was important? (Lead discussion for five minutes.)

Hand out: Activists for Hope *Sample Systems Statements*

Activists for Hope
Sample Systems (Capacity) Statements

Activists for Hope (AFH) is an imaginary NGO working in HIV and AIDS in Botswana created for illustrative purposes. Below are sample answers to give you an idea of the types of information potential donors and partners find most helpful when deciding whether to fund or to partner with an organization like yours. The questions are in bold, followed by the sample answer.

Say: Look at these paragraphs written by *Activists for Hope*. You may want to refer to the sample as you refine your paragraphs later. Do not worry if you do not have the same experience as this imaginary organization has. As with your elevator speech and capability statement, it is important to be clear and never make claims that you cannot prove. Remember, all three—elevator speech, capability statement and systems statement—should be revised to reflect changes in your organization and its programs.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Discuss the participants' plans to finalize the systems statement for their organization. Remind them to develop an action plan with tasks, timeline and person(s) responsible.

Wrap up

A system statement can be used to complement your capability statement. Consider using both statements in written materials shared with funders and partners and in proposals. Remember to add your logo and contact details. (See Module 3.3.)

Elements of a Systems (Capacity) Statement

A capacity or **systems** statement describes **how** and **how well** your organization is managed.

Systems statements answer the questions: Is your organization well managed? Is your organization able to report on funds? How reliable is your monitoring and evaluation system?

Potential donors or partners often want to know the answers to these questions before they will entrust an NGO with funds or form a partnership. Your programs may be well regarded, but donors and partners want to be sure that your internal systems are strong enough to sustain your programs. In general, systems statements address the following:

Governance (Board of Directors)

- By-laws
- Composition, number of Board members
- How often the Board meets

Management (Leadership, structure)

- Number of relevant staff
- Experience and training of relevant staff
- Written policies and manuals related to the organization's systems
- Established structures and routines to manage day-to-day operations

Financial Management

- Written policies and standards for procurement, travel, expenses, reimbursement; timecard system
- Proof that a system is functioning (For example, a strong financial management system that is regularly audited and facilitates submission of timely reports to donors)
- Relevant software/technology in place to support the organization's systems (For example, QuickBooks™)

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Systems for gathering data, assuring its quality, and analyzing it

DEFINITIONS

Governance refers to the systems and processes needed to ensure the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization. This is typically the responsibility of the Board of Directors (Board) who make the policies that the executive director and staff carry out day to day.

- **By-laws** are the rules governing the operation of a nonprofit corporation. By-laws often also provide the methods for selecting the Board of Directors, creating Board committees, and conducting meetings.

Management takes direction from and reports to the Board and is responsible for directing the day-to-day operations of an organization, including implementing policies and programs.

Financial Management involves planning, organizing, controlling and monitoring financial resources to support the objectives and functioning of an organization. Good financial management requires more than simply keeping accurate accounting records. Many NGOs may have only an accounting or bookkeeping system rather than a financial management system. Accounting is a subset of financial management. A financial management system encompasses both administrative systems and accounting systems.

- **Administrative systems** provide the framework for handling procurement, travel, inventory, facilities and personnel matters such as payroll and benefits.
- Accounting systems encompass the methods, procedures and controls established to gather, record, classify, analyze, summarize, interpret and present accurate and timely financial data.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) encompasses the process of collecting, assuring quality of and analyzing data and information for the purpose of identifying and measuring a project's impact.

Activists for Hope: Governance Systems (Capacity) Statement

Activists for Hope is an imaginary organization working in HIV and AIDS in Botswana.

To prepare their systems statement, first, they began by answering the following questions about how the NGO is governed.

1. Do we have a Board?
   Yes, we have a Board of Directors.

2. How many members are on our Board?
   We have nine members on our Board.

3. Where is our Board located?
   Our Board is located in Gabarone, Botswana.

4. Who is on our Board?
   Our Board is drawn from a spectrum of community stakeholders—including the head of a local bank, a local school principal, a health worker, and a business owner. The members offer diverse and relevant professional expertise.

5. How often does our Board meet?
   Our Board meets every quarter.

6. Does our Board operate according to written by-laws?
   Yes, we have written by-laws.

7. What is the role of our Board?
   Our Board provides oversight of our organization and helps raise funds in the community.

Then, they took the information in those seven sentences about their Board, chose the most important points, and wrote:

Activists for Hope's systems statement about its Board of Directors:

Based in Gabarone, Botswana, our nine-member Board of Directors represents a spectrum of community stakeholders, including the head of a local bank, a school principal, a health worker, and a business owner. As required in our Board's by-laws, they meet every quarter to provide close oversight of our organization's management and activities.

Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire

Capacity or systems statements assure potential donors and partners about the strength of your organization's systems.

The following questionnaire is designed to give you the building blocks to construct a strong, clear and concise systems statement.

Instructions: Write a sentence to answer each of the following questions about your organization's operations—governance; management; finance; monitoring and evaluation. Answer as honestly and completely as you can.

If you do not have all of the experience, systems or structures in place right now, that is OK. This questionnaire is designed to help you describe what you do have.

Do not try to include everything. Choose only those details that you think are most important. You will write and revise your statement many times, especially to support specific proposals. That is normal.

Once you answer the questions:

1. Review the answer sentences for each question in each domain and circle the clearest, most powerful words and/or phrases.
2. Change any long words or jargon into everyday language.
3. Connect one sentence to another with additional phrases into a paragraph to make them flow naturally.
4. Read each paragraph out loud to yourself and edit again, cutting out any unnecessary words, but keeping the elements you circled. Read it again. Edit as appropriate.
5. Repeat step 4 again and again for each paragraph until you are satisfied that you have been accurate and clear, and that no one paragraph is more than 150 words.

Remember to talk about those things you know are of most interest to your target audience/donor.

1. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE.

Board of Directors

Do you have a Board?

How many members are on your Board?

Where is your Board located?

Who is on your Board?

Does your Board represent a diverse cross-section of the community?

How often does your Board meet?

Does your Board have a set of by-laws?

What is the role of the Board?

2. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

Management Team

Does your organization have a (senior) management team?

What are the titles of your management team?

How many years of experience working in the field of _____ *(identify the area(s) that best fits your organization)* does each member of your management team have? How many years in total?

Staffing

How many full-time staff do you have (indicate including or not including management team)?

How many part-time staff?

How many program staff do you have?

Do you have financial staff?

Do you have M&E staff?

How many administrative staff?

Volunteers

Do you have volunteers?

How many volunteers do you have and what do they do?

What is the total number of hours that volunteers provide to the organization in a week, a month or a year?

Structure

Does your organization follow formal lines of reporting and supervision? If yes, how is it documented?

Does your organization have an organogram (organizational chart), that is a diagram that shows the structure of your organization and the relationships and relative ranks of its parts and positions/jobs?

Do all staff work at one site? If not, at how many sites and where?

Does your organization have an employee or human resources policy manual?

Does your organization manage sub-grants?
If yes, do you have a USAID compliant sub-grants manual?

3. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING.

What staff are responsible for financial management—accounting, compliance, procurement?

What is the experience/training of the finance personnel?

What accounting systems or software do you use to ensure strong controls?

Is your accounting system able to track income and expenses broken out by donor and/or project?
If yes, describe.

Does the accounting system provide for a logical and consistent method of allocation of indirect costs to intermediate and final cost objective?

When does your financial year begin and end?

Does your organization have and follow a written financial management manual? (For example, are there written policies or procedures for banking; handling cash; delegating authority; travel reimbursement; ordering and purchasing?)

What is your policy on audits?

What external firm(s) audit(ed) your organization? Under what guidelines have you been audited? For example, *USAID Guidelines for Financial Audits Contracted by Foreign Recipients*

Have you ever received funds from USAID?
If yes, do you consistently submit quarterly financial reports to USAID or, as a sub-grantee, to the grantee organization? Other financial management system strengths?

Have you received technical assistance (TA) for financial management and reporting?

If yes, describe in one or two sentences what TA was provided and how your financial systems were strengthened?

4. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E).

Do you have staff responsible for conducting M&E?
If yes, how many M&E full time staff; part-time staff?

Are they solely responsible for M&E?

What is the training/experience of the M&E personnel?

What is their experience with PEPFAR or other indicators?

Do you routinely audit the quality of your data? If yes, how and how often?

Have you received TA and training for M&E? If yes, what specifically was the nature of the TA/training?

Describe in one or two sentences a particular strength and/or success of your M&E efforts?

Do you use your M&E data to inform decision making about your programs?

What else do you want to say about your capacity for M&E?

USAID recipients: Describe how and how often you reported on your targets to USAID/DC and to the Mission?

5. OTHER AREAS

Has your organization received any TA in governance, management, finance, human resources, M&E or organizational development? If yes, describe briefly what and from whom.

Do you have a strategic plan? If yes, what period of time does it cover (from when to when)?

What else do you want to say about your organization?

Activists for Hope: Sample Answers
Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire

Activists for Hope (AFH) is an imaginary NGO working in HIV and AIDS in Botswana created for illustrative purposes. Below are sample answers to give you an idea of the types of information potential donors and partners find most helpful when deciding whether to fund or to partner with an organization like yours. The questions are in bold, followed by the sample answer.

1. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE.

Do you have a Board of Directors?

Yes, we have a Board of Directors.

How many members are on your Board?

We have nine members on our Board.

Where is your Board located?

Our board is located in Gabarone, Botswana.

Who is on your Board?

Our board is drawn from a wide spectrum of community stakeholders, including the head of a local bank, a school principal, a health worker and a business owner.

Does your Board represent a diverse cross-section of the community?

The members offer diverse and relevant professional expertise.

How often does your Board meet?

Our board meets once every quarter.

Does your Board have a set of by-laws?

Yes, we have written by-laws

What is the role of the Board?

Our board provides oversight of our organization and helps mobilize resources.

2. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

Management Team

Does your organization have a (senior) management team?

Yes, we have a senior management team.

What are the titles of your management team?

Our senior management team includes the Executive Director, Program Manager and Project Officer.

How many years of experience working in the field of _____ (identify the area(s) that best fits your organization) does each member of your management team have? How many years in total?

Our Executive Director has 20 years of experience. Our Program Manager has 12 years of experience. Our Program Officer has 12 years of experience. They have a combined total of 44 years of experience.

Staffing

How many full-time staff do you have (indicate including or not including management team)?

We have 20 full-time staff not including the management team

How many part-time staff?

We have four part-time staff.

How many program staff do you have?

We have seven program staff.

Do you have financial staff?

We have three finance staff

Do you have M&E staff?

We have two M&E staff.

How many administrative staff?

We have one full-time administrative coordinator and one part-time administrative assistant.

Volunteers

Do you have volunteers?

Yes, we have volunteers.

How many volunteers do you have and what do they do?

We have 10 volunteers who help us by answering phones, greeting clients, and handing out brochures at markets.

What is the total number of hours that volunteers provide to the organization in a week, a month or a year?

Our volunteers contribute approximately 10 hours each a week, that is 400 hours a month.

Structure

Does your organization follow formal lines of reporting and supervision? If yes, how is it documented?

Yes, all of our staff have job descriptions and written reporting lines.

Does your organization have an organogram (organizational chart), that is a diagram that shows the structure of your organization and the relationships and relative ranks of its parts and positions/jobs?

We are now developing an organogram with a consultant and formalizing our reporting and supervision system. It will be documented in our Human Resource (HR) or employee policy manual once it is complete.

Do all staff work at one site? If not, at how many sites and where?

All of our staff are based in Gabarone but our volunteers are divided between our office in Gabarone and our sites in Tlokweng and Kanye. Our staff make daily visits to the field sites.

Does your organization have an employee or human resources policy manual?

We have hired a consultant to develop our HR policies and it is in the process of being completed.

Does your organization manage sub-grants? If yes, do you have a USAID compliant sub-grants manual?

We have never managed sub-grants. We have been a sub-grantee however.

3. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING.

What staff are responsible for financial management—accounting, compliance, procurement?

Currently we have 10 staff within the organization and we have a Finance Manager with over 12 years' experience managing both USAID and other donor-funded projects. In addition to the Finance Manager, and to ensure adequate segregation of duties, the organization has a Finance Assistant with over 5 years' experience providing financial management assistance to the organization.

What is the experience/training of the finance personnel?

The current finance manager holds a XXXXX [educational experience] and has undertaken numerous workshops and trainings in managing U.S. Government rules and regulations. The finance assistant holds a XXXX [educational experience].

Is your accounting system able to track income and expenses broken out by donor and/or project? If yes, describe.

The organization currently uses XXXX [list the accounting system] to track income and expenses. The accounting system is set up using cost centers so that income and expenses can be tracked by donor and also the organization can report on all the costs and income within the organization.

Does the accounting system provide for a logical and consistent method of allocation of indirect costs to intermediate and final cost objective?

The organization follows a cost allocation policy so shared costs are allocated consistently between the various donors and projects.

When does your financial year begin and end?

The financial year follows the calendar year, begining January 1 and ending December 31.

Does your organization have and follow a written financial management manual? (For example, are there written policies or procedures for banking; handling cash; delegating authority; travel reimbursement; ordering and purchasing?)

Yes. The organization has written a Financial Management Manual that includes accounting routines, cash and banking procedures, travel and procurement policies all approved by our Board of Directors. Copies of the Financial Manual were given to all staff and a training on new policies is held as needed. (AFH Financial Manual available on request.)

What is your policy on audits?

We conducted an annual statutory audit (please see attached audit report) for the financial year ending XXXX. The organization has also undertaken specific audits as required by donors. Because the organization has received multiple USAID grants and has exceeded the threshold of expending more than $300,000 in USAID funds within the organization's financial year, an audit has been conducted for the financial year end XXXX, in accordance with the USAID guidelines on foreign recipients.

We were audited once by an external auditor.

What external firm(s) audit(ed) your organization? Under what guidelines have you been audited, for example, USAID GUIDELINES FOR FINANCIAL AUDITS CONTRACTED BY FOREIGN RECIPIENTS?

Deloitte Botswana audited our organization.

Have you ever received funds from USAID? If yes, do you consistently submit quarterly financial reports to USAID or, as a sub-grantee, to the grantee organization? Other financial management system strengths:

The organization is a sub-grantee to XXXX and as a requirement submits monthly expense reports and is the recipient of numerous site visits to ensure that the supporting documentation is reasonable, allowable and allocable.

Other financial management system strengths:

- The organization uses a timesheet system that allocates employees' time worked on respective projects. The timesheets are also used to allocate the salaries and wages of staff to the respective donors/projects. The organization has a policy that documents the timekeeping system (please see attached).
- The organization has a policy on how to account for unallowable costs, as included in the finance manual.

Have you received Technical Assistance (TA) for financial management and reporting? If yes, describe in one or two sentences what the TA provided and how your financial systems were strengthened?

The organization maintains a fixed asset register that keeps track of all items over $XXX [list the threshold for which the organization records assets]; has received training around the U.S. Government rules and regulations pertaining to financial management and one-on-one support from the prime recipient. The TA has focused on ensuring that we have documented policies and procedures for the organization that are in line with USG rules and regulations, and also that there is adequate supporting documentation for income and expenses so that we could successfully manage the program while achieving our targets.

4. DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E).

Do you have staff responsible for conducting M&E? If yes, How many M&E full time staff; part-time staff

We have one M&E Manager, an M&E Officer and two people who do data entry and processing.

Four people. All are full-time staff with our organization.

Are they solely responsible for M&E?

The manager and officer work only on M&E. The other two work part-time on M&E and they also work on finance.

What is the training/experience of the M&E personnel?

The M&E Manager has a bachelor's degree in economics, including some courses in statistics and demography. He worked for five years with the Department of the Census and 2 years with the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) before coming here. The M&E Officer has a bachelor's degree in sociology and worked with a research firm for two years before coming here. The two data entry staff have training in accounting and data entry.

What is their experience with PEPFAR or other indicators?

This is our second PEPFAR project. All our staff have worked with PEPFAR indicators. In addition, the M&E Manager developed the indicators to meet national priorities. We also have experience setting malaria indicators for a PMI program we implement.

Do you routinely audit the quality of your data? If yes, how and how often?

Yes, we audit data quality annually for the routine program data.

Have you received TA and training for M&E? If yes, what specifically was the nature of the TA/training?

Yes. Our M&E staff have received training in M&E. They received a weeklong course in how to set indicators, and collect, process and report data. In addition, the manager and officer each took a two-week course on survey implementation. They have also received training in data processing and management, as well as ethical considerations for human participants for which all have completed online courses and received certificates. Also, we had TA from the prime recipient who reviewed our reporting data and suggested ways to improve it.

Describe in one or two sentences a particular strength and/or success of your M&E efforts?

Our manager is very good at analyzing and interpreting data. He noticed that the numbers of men getting tested at our clinic was very low and did some qualitative research to find out that men prefer to come at the end of the day, when the clinic is usually closed. So we decided to keep the clinic open several evenings a week and promoted this activity to men and we saw the numbers increase.

Do you use your M&E data to inform decision making about your programs?

Yes, as explained in the example just above.

What else do you want to say about your capacity for M&E?

Our organization is committed to M&E, especially since we see it can improve programs. Our PEPFAR project allocates 5 percent of the total budget to M&E. It is the first priority for the two data entry/processing staff among their other activities.

USAID recipients: Describe how and how often you reported on your targets to USAID/DC and to the Mission?

We report the results on all the routine national indicators and results from any special studies to the PEPFAR coordinator here annually.

5. OTHER AREAS

Has your organization received any TA in governance, management, finance, human resources, M&E or organizational development? If yes, describe briefly what and from whom.

Yes, as a sub-grantee under the Botswana Capable Partners program we received technical assistance in governance, management, finance, and human resources.

Do you have a strategic plan? If yes, what period of time does it cover (from when to when)?

We don't have a strategic plan but we are intending to start that process in the near future.

What else do you want to say about your organization?

We have a very collaborative and dynamic team—we value participation and try very hard to promote effective communications among the staff and with beneficiaries and donors.

Activists for Hope
Sample Systems (Capacity) Statements

A capacity or **systems** statement describes **how** and **how well** your organization is managed.

Below are the capacity or systems statements developed by *Activists for Hope,* an imaginary NGO, based on the answers to the Systems (Capacity) Statement Questionnaire.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Our Senior Management team—the Executive Director, Program Manager and Project Officer—brings 44 years of experience in public health and HIV/AIDS to the organization. They lead a dynamic and collaborative team of 20 full-time employees, including 7 program staff, 3 finance staff and 2 monitoring and evaluation staff members. Our team is based in our office in Gaborone and members travel daily to field sites in Tlokweng and Kanye. We also have a strong volunteer base of 10 dedicated individuals who contribute approximately 400 hours each month to our organization. Our nine-member Board of Directors, which meets on a quarterly basis as required in our by-laws, provides close oversight of our organization's management and activities and helps mobilize resources.

As a sub-grantee on a Round 9 Global Fund HIV project and several USAID-funded projects, our management structure, and reporting and supervision systems were sufficient to successfully manage and implement HIV/AIDS activities under those awards. In addition, as a sub-grantee of the Capable Partners Program, we received training on governance, effective leadership and supervision, and financial management, which further enhanced our management capabilities. We also hired a consultant to help us refine our human resources manual and employee performance appraisal system.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

Our finance team is composed of our Senior Finance Manager, who has more than 12 years of experience managing USAID and other donor-funded projects, and two finance support staff to ensure adequate segregation of duties. As a sub-grantee on several USAID awards, our organization has received training on U.S. Government rules and regulations, sound financial management, and has also received one-on-one support from the prime recipient. The technical assistance has ensured that we have documented policies and procedures that are U.S. Government compliant and that all costs are reasonable, allowable and allocable so that we can successfully manage programs while achieving our targets. The financial year end of the organization is 31 December and our organization undertakes an annual statutory audit. Our organization has also undertaken an audit in accordance with the USAID guidelines on foreign recipients that was conducted for the financial year end 2011. Our organization has written finance, travel, procurement and human resource policies that are applicable to all staff and there is a timekeeping system that identifies employee labor by intermediate or final cost objective.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Our M&E Manager, who brings extensive experience with both the Department of Census and the National AIDS Control Program (NACP), supervises our M&E Officer and two part-time data entry assistants. As a sub-grantee on the Local Partners Capacity Building Project (LPCB) and as direct USG grantee on the New Partners Initiative (NPI), we reported regularly on PEPFAR Indicators. In addition, we currently report on malaria indicators as a sub-grantee to FHI 360 on a PMI project. We audit data quality annually for the routine program data, and report the results on all the routine national indicators and results from any special studies to the PEPFAR coordinator here annually. Our M&E Manager is skilled in data analysis and interpretation and regularly disseminates learnings to senior management and throughout the organization to inform decision making.

MODULE 3.5

Connecting with Donors

TOTAL TIME

2 hours 45 minutes

AGENDA

3.5 Connecting with Donors

- **a.** Culture matters (45 minutes)
- **b.** Learning to check our assumptions (40 minutes)
- **c.** Developing cross cultural bridges (40 minutes)
- **d.** Managing donor communication (60 minutes)
- **e.** Connecting with donors (40minutes)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

If this module is presented as a stand-alone workshop, see "Getting Started" at the beginning of the guide.

Introduction

This module is about helping you communicate more effectively in person with prospective funders. Finding support for your program(s) may be something outside your experience that requires new skills, new tools, perhaps even learning a new culture—one with its own language and rules, especially if you are interacting with international donors. With that in mind, this module is designed to help you:

- enhance your awareness about how cultural assumptions influence communication and relationships with international donors, and
- develop some strategies to more confidently communicate and nurture relationships with donors.

The exercises begin by defining a few terms and inviting you to consider some of the key processes and concepts that support culture and communication. Then, the module explores ways you can apply these concepts to strengthening your communication and interactions with international donors.

ATTENTION

The exercises in this module are designed to build on one another. It is best if the exercises are completed in the order presented.

Handouts are provided at the end of the module.

MODULE 3.5a

Culture Matters

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

45 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ define culture,
- ✔ understand why culture is important, and
- ✔ recognize how cultural assumptions affect communication and relationships with donors.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers, tape
- ☐ Handout—***What Matters Most?***

EXERCISE

What matters most?

Open with a series of questions.

Say: What makes you special?

- Why do you dress the way you do?
- Why do you do things the way you do?
- What are the most powerful influences in your life?

One answer to these questions is "culture." It is culture's impact that is explored in this module and in the next exercise.

Hand out: *What Matters Most?*

What Matters Most?

Directions

1. Answer each question in the list below with one phrase or sentence.
2. Rate each item from 1-10 (1 is the most important, 10 is the least important) according to how much it means to you.

Review the nine questions on your handout. Answer each question in the list with one phrase or sentence. Then, rate each item from 1-10 (1 is the most important, 10 is the least important) according to how much it means to you.

Your answers to these questions are shaped by cultural influences. For example, what you wear on holidays is not just an individual choice, but is influenced by the group of people you are part of. You will have five minutes.

(*After five minutes call time.*)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Write the definition of culture on a flipchart page and post as a point of reference for modules. Emphasize that we are not looking at culture through the lens of an anthropologist.

Debrief:

- *Ask participants to share what they wrote and their rankings.*
- *Ask, what do you value most. What do you value least? Why?*
- *What do you think this says about your culture?*
- *Are there more cultures represented in the room than initially thought?*

Explain: Culture has many definitions. For our purposes, "culture" refers to features of life shared in common by a group of people. This includes shared outlook, expectations, behaviors, attitudes, and experiences.

Ask: What are some cultural features or characteristics that might be shared by a group of people? Let's brainstorm answers to this question. For example, gender, marital status, fan of _____ football team.

EXERCISE

Group Brainstorm on Features of Culture

(At the top of a page, write "Features of Culture." As participants call them out, list the characteristics under the heading.)

(Suggested responses to supplement those of participants.)

- *gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status*
- *geographic location, language, history, customs*
- *values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, religion*
- *education and literacy, occupation, income, social class and status, leisure activities*

Ask: How can such a list—"Features of Culture"—help us understand differences and similarities among people?
(Possible answer: Differences may seem less strange or unusual when we understand that individuals belong to many different cultures at once and, therefore, if we look beyond the surface, we may find we have more in common than we thought.)

(To reinforce the point that there are things that unite people in ways they might not expect, ask a question about a non-threatening characteristic. For example, "Raise your hand if you play a musical instrument.")

Say: When we think of culture this broadly, we realize we all belong to many cultures at once.[1] And, we realize that we can acquire a new culture, for example, by moving to a new place, getting married, taking a new job, or joining a sports team.

[1] *Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges,* Marcelle E. DuPraw and Marya Axner, www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html (accessed 6.19.12)

Ask: Thinking about culture in this way, would someone please share a brief personal experience about becoming part of a different culture?

Say: Keeping our broad definition of culture in mind, when we think of current and potential funders—whether from an international agency like USAID or from a national government or business—it may help to think of them as members of a "culture" who have their own language and set of rules for how they operate. The more you know about a funder's culture, the more you may be able to minimize misunderstandings and maximize the potential to communicate effectively and build strong relationships. Before we explore aspects of communicating with funders, let's take a look at some aspects of our starting point or baseline—ourselves.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

If the group is small (3 or fewer) do this as a group exercise. If larger, break into pairs. Each pair lists its ideas on a flipchart sheet. Give the group 2 minutes to brainstorm two different lists—worries/hopes. Discuss and compare the two lists.

EXERCISE

Mirror, mirror

Ask: When communicating with people different from you—

1. What do you **worry** may happen?
2. What do you **hope** may happen?

Take 2 minutes to brainstorm two separate lists—one for hopes, one for worries. For example:

Worries	Hopes
Example: I may appear disrespectful.	Example: I may learn something new.

Say: Time. Ask participants to share what they wrote.

Wrap up

Any time we are interacting with people different from ourselves, it is likely they have similar lists of worries and hopes in their heads. Understanding that you both may feel uncertain helps create a bridge between you. It is easy to misinterpret things people do in a cross-cultural setting. To keep from misunderstanding the behavior of individuals from another culture, it helps to try to see the world from their point of view, not yours.

MODULE 3.5b

Learning to Check Our Assumptions

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

40 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

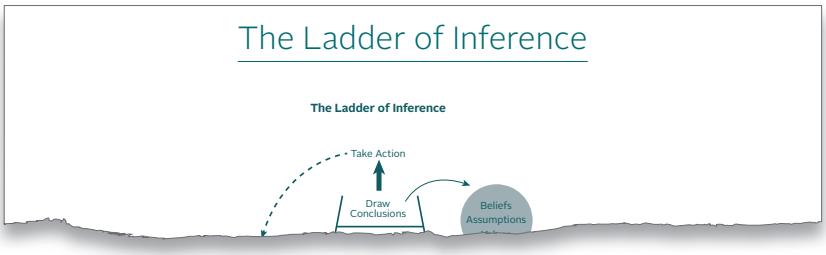
- ✔ list at least two steps on the Ladder of Influence—a process for describing how we leap from facts to actions, and
- ✔ analyze how facts and assumptions may influence decisions and actions.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers, tape
- ☐ Handout—***The Ladder of Inference; Between the Lines;*** Article—***Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges***

The Ladder of Inference

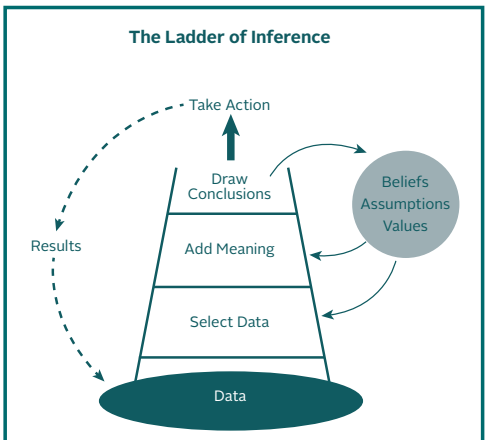
Hand out: *The Ladder of Inference*



Say: The Ladder of Inference comes from Peter Senge's book "The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook." It describes the thinking process that we go through, usually without realizing it, to get from a fact to a decision or action. We move up and down the Ladder of Inference in *milliseconds* all day long. It happens when we interact with people, read email or listen to the news. It also affects how others see us as they climb their own Ladders of Inference.

The thinking process is seen as rungs on a ladder. Starting at the bottom of the ladder, we observe, see what happens, hear what is said, or experience a situation—no more and no less. From there, we:

- Select data. That is, narrow our focus by selecting (unconsciously) the data or information that interests us.



Based on: *The 5th Discipline Fieldbook,* Peter Senge, 1994.

- Add meaning, make assumptions, sometimes without even realizing it.
- Draw conclusions based on the interpreted facts and our assumptions.
- Develop beliefs based on these conclusions.
- Take actions that seem "right" because they are based on what we believe.

Our beliefs have a big impact on what we select from reality and can lead us to ignore the real facts. Soon we are jumping to conclusions—by missing facts and skipping steps in the reasoning process. Even when we have the best of intentions, it is easy for us to run up the ladder and get things wrong.

EXERCISE

Climbing up the ladder

Read the example[2]:

> John is working on a report to a donor and needs help and information from Mary. Unable to reach her, he sends her an email. When she does not respond, he calls her mobile and leaves her a voice mail, or two, or three. He remembers that the last time they worked together, he and Mary had some disagreements. So, he concludes that she is avoiding him. As days go by, he convinces himself that Mary is trying to sabotage him. In fact (he thinks to himself) as he recalls, she never liked him. He decides then and there that the next time she needs something from him for her projects he won't give it to her. Soon he starts looking for examples of how she is trying to make him look bad. He decides that he does not like her either and might even say bad things about her when talking with colleagues. The next time John sees Mary, he gives her a dirty look and soon other teammates notice the communication breakdown between them.

Ask: How did John climb up the Ladder of Inference?
Suggestions follow:

- *He started with facts—real observable data. (Fact: Email and voice mail were not responded to.)*
- *He interpreted the facts and made assumptions based on the meaning he applied to his data/facts. (He remembers that they had disagreements and assumes the lack of response relates to this.)*

[2] Adapted from, *The Ladder of Inference: How assumptions can cause miscommunication.* Yvonne F. Brown. JAD Communications International. www.jadcommunications.com/yvonnefbrown/files/The%20Ladder%20of%20Inference.pdf (accessed 6.27.12)

- *He drew conclusions and made decisions based on his assumptions. (He concludes that Mary is avoiding him and is trying to sabotage him by not helping, and also that she does not like him.)*
- *Then he acted based on those conclusions and assumptions. (He decides he will not help her in the future.)*
- *Going forward each time he interacted with Mary, he looked for evidence to support his conclusions and assumptions. Each time he did that, he convinced himself that Mary was out to make him look bad, when in fact, he was creating the reality to support his actions. (He decides he does not like her, says bad things about her to others and gives her an angry look when she returns.)*

Ask: What other conclusions might you draw from the data—the unreturned emails and voice mails?
(Possible conclusions)
- *Mary was on holiday*
- *Mary was at home because her son was ill*

And so on . . .

Say: The only facts that John could be sure of were—he did not receive an email or voice message from Mary. Everything else he imagined, he guessed or assumed.

We cannot live our lives and interact with people without adding meaning or coming to conclusions. However, we can improve our communication and the actions we take by using the Ladder of Inference in three ways:
1. Becoming more aware of our own thinking and reasoning (reflection);
2. Making our thinking and reasoning more visible to others (transparency);
3. Inquiring into others' thinking and reasoning (inquiry).

In practice this might play out as follows:
- You ask for data in an open-ended way, using a neutral voice: "Mary, why haven't you returned my calls or answered my emails?" OR
- You test your assumptions: "Mary, are you upset with me?" OR
- You simply test the observable data, and in a neutral voice say: "Mary, you haven't returned my calls or emails." To which she might reply: "Sorry, I was on holiday. How can I help you?"

EXERCISE

Between the lines[3]

Hand out: *Between the Lines*

Between the Lines

Think about how culture and The Ladder of Inference interact in the following email written by Robert, an American who observed a meeting between international donors and local grantees from a developing country.

The Ladder of Inference

Take Action

Say: Think about how culture and the Ladder of Inference interact in the following email written by Robert, an American who observed a meeting between international donors and local grantees in a developing country.

Ask a participant to read the email aloud.

> The meeting was set to begin at 9 AM. Donor representatives arrived early and were seated before the start time. Grantees began to arrive and sit down a few minutes after nine o'clock, others continued to trickle in until 10. Grantees were dressed in business clothes; the men wore ties and jackets. The donors were much more casual; none wore neckties. There were name cards at each seat. A copy of the participant list was handed out along with the agenda. The chairman, from a donor agency, waited five minutes before he began the meeting by reviewing the agenda. When asked if anyone wanted to add to the agenda, donors spoke up; no grantees did. For the next hour, donors spoke up, sometimes interrupting one another. Grantees sat at attention in their seats, speaking quietly and only when spoken to. As a result, I believe none of the grantees is interested in continuing their projects with the present donors.
>
> —Robert

Robert, the email author, makes a number of assumptions about time, relationships, and the way people communicate. Take 5 minutes to analyze Robert's reasoning as he climbed up the ladder. Jot down the cultural assumptions you think lead to his conclusion that none of the grantees is interested in continuing their projects with the present donors. *(Refer to handout/worksheet).*

[3] *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook.* Craig Storti. 2011. www.peacecorps.gov/wws/publications/culture/pdf/workbook.pdf (accessed 6.25.12)

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

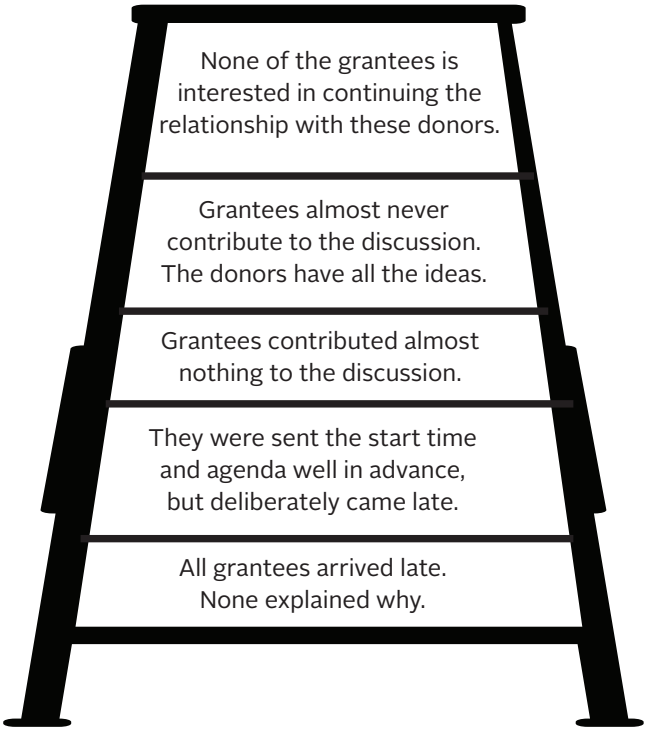
Possible points of discussion follow. Draw a ladder on a flipchart showing Robert's conclusion at the top.

Debrief: *How did Robert climb up the ladder of inference? What did Robert believe or assume?*

(Suggested responses to supplement those of participants.)

- *Being punctual signals respect for other attendees.*
- *Apologizing when late to a meeting is appropriate.*
- *Not taking time to introduce everyone around the table is acceptable behavior.*
- *Speaking only when spoken to shows a lack of interest.*
- *Interrupting someone while he is speaking is acceptable behavior.*
- *Speaking freely shows engagement.*
- *Participants who do not speak up are not interested in the topic.*

Robert's climb up
The Ladder of Inference

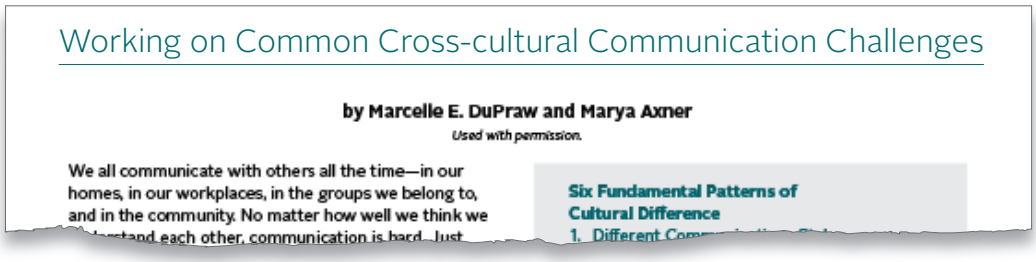


Say: Now imagine for a moment a culture in which people do not share these beliefs. Imagine that a group of people actually believe the opposite. How would they view the same meeting?

The fact that people from two different cultures can view the same behavior differently is precisely what makes cross-cultural encounters so challenging.

Ask: Which behaviors/actions described in this meeting do you think were appropriate or inappropriate in your culture? Why?

Hand out: *Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges*


Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges

by Marcelle E. DuPraw and Marya Axner

Used with permission.

We all communicate with others all the time—in our homes, in our workplaces, in the groups we belong to, and in the community. No matter how well we think we

Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Difference

1. Different Com

Wrap up

When we have infrequent or superficial contact with other cultures, we often unconsciously use stereotyping as a way to save time or to classify people to make it easier to work with them (or so we think). Stereotypes at their most basic level are a set of assumptions about others whose actual beliefs, habits and realities more often than not disagree with our own. This is risky because when we stereotype (Africans love football, Americans are time obsessed, and so on) we may be trying to show affinity for a culture, but end up revealing ignorance instead. By using the Ladder of Inference, we can reflect on our assumptions to guard against stereotyping. By looking at how we arrive at our conclusions, we can learn to get back to the facts and use our beliefs and experiences to positive effect.

To learn more about this, you may want to read the article *"Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges"* by Marcelle E. DuPraw and Marya Axner. This article offers a perspective on differences that need not become obstacles to communicating with and understanding one another.

MODULE 3.5c

Building Cross Cultural Bridges

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

40 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ list at least two strategies leading to improved cross-cultural communication.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Handout—***Seven Tips to Improve Communication with International Donors***

EXERCISE:

An awkward moment

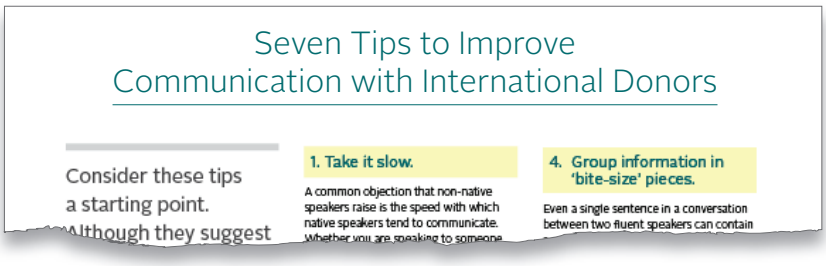
Say: Think of the most awkward moment you have experienced when meeting with a donor at a conference—either a moment when you were confused, embarrassed or annoyed. Do not worry—you do not have to share it. After the meeting, later that day, write down three things you think you could have done differently to improve the communication between you?

Debrief: *What are lessons you learned from your awkward moment?*

Say: We will review some ways to help improve cross-cultural communication. Consider them a starting point. Although they suggest some useful DOs and DON'Ts for enhancing communication with international donors, remember, a list of behaviors or a script cannot prepare you for every situation. What is a "do" in one set of circumstances might very well be a "don't" in another.

Hand out: *Seven Tips to Improve Communication with International Donors*

(Review aloud or ask participants to read silently.)



Seven Tips to Improve Communication with International Donors

Consider these tips a starting point. Although they suggest

1. Take it slow.

A common objection that non-native speakers raise is the speed with which native speakers tend to communicate. Whether you are speaking to someone

4. Group information in 'bite-size' pieces.

Even a single sentence in a conversation between two fluent speakers can contain

Say: Once we consider a broad definition of culture and realize that its diverse beliefs and practices influence our decisions and actions, we can be more open to respecting our differences and collaborating across cultural lines.

BREAK: 10 minutes

MODULE 3.5d

Managing Donor Communication

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

60 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ identify who speaks for the organization on a range of issues, and
- ✔ develop a plan for communicating more effectively with donors.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers
- ☐ Handouts—***Sample Donor Communications Management Plan Matrix; Donor Communications Management Plan Matrix*** **(blank)**

Ask: How do you manage communication with donors or other important audiences? *(Possible follow-up questions: Who speaks for the organization or project? How is information transmitted?)*

Say: Effective communication is one of the easiest and most important strategies for strengthening your relationship with donors and maintaining their interest and loyalty. Aside from submitting required reports, communication is often taken for granted, overlooked or done at the last minute. There are three simple steps to harnessing the power of communication:

1. plan
2. define roles and responsibilities
3. implement consistently

Hand out: *Sample Donor Communications Management Plan Matrix*

Sample Donor Communications Management Plan Matrix

Name of donor: USAID **Project:** Build agricultural skills for OVC caregivers **Date:** 8 August 2012

External Point of Contact (POC)	Communication Type	Objective(s) of Communication	Medium	Frequency	Audience	Owner	Deliverable
Executive Director	Kickoff Meeting	Introduce the	Face to face	Once	• Funder-USAID	• Project	Agenda

Let's look at a Communication Management Plan (CMP)—a tool that can help you do all three. A CMP can be used to define the communication requirements for your organization or for a specific donor-funded project. A CMP contains the following elements:

- Who receives the communication (audience)
- Type of communication (meeting, brochure, annual report)
- Objective of the communication
- How the information will be communicated (medium)
- When information will be distributed (frequency)
- Who does the communicating (owner)
- What is the output. (deliverable)

A CMP is not written in stone. Parts of it will evolve to reflect changes in the project.

Ask: Let's look at a sample CMP framework. What is included in this matrix? *(Follow-up by asking what type of information is commonly shared with a donor, who shares the information and how it is shared.)*

EXERCISE

Communication Management Planning

Hand out: *Donor Communications Management Plan Template*

Donor Communications Management Plan Template

Name of donor: **USAID** Project: **Build agricultural skills for OVC caregivers** Date: **8 August 2012**

External Point of Contact	Communication Type	Objective(s) of Communication	Medium	Frequency	Audience	Owner	Deliverable

Say: Look at the CMP sample plan and blank matrix. In the next 20 minutes, use the template to create a CMP for one of your current donor-funded projects. Adapt as you see fit, for example, where titles are listed, names can be substituted.

Debrief: *Now that you have had a chance to work with the CMP matrix, let's talk about the experience.*

- *How did you find the process of filling in the matrix?*
- *Was the information readily available or do you need to dig for it after the session?*

Say: Who speaks for your organization? Who does the talking, about what and to whom? Do you have one spokesperson or several who represent the organization depending on the nature of the donor inquiry or interaction?

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Depending on how many people are gathered, you may want to break the group into twos or threes. If possible, each group should work on a CMP for a different project.

Move around the room and observe how the groups are doing. Provide input if asked.

Attention: Identify who will communicate with donors and about what. Consult your agreement or contract because these documents often specify the points of contact between donor and grantee.

If the points of contact are not specified, decide who is your point of contact to answer different questions. Look at your Donor CMP matrix and write down who interacts with donors on the following:

Who	About What
Exec Director, Name	Performance management plan
Financial Manager, Name	Financial reports
Communication coordinator	Signs, branding, Website

Ask: What are three next steps you will take to improve communication with international donors? *(Write on flipchart.)*

(Suggested responses to supplement those of participants.)

- *Implement donor communication management plan (refer to your matrix)*
- *Ask each donor what form of communication the donor prefers (email, phone, etc.) and what issues/results are of greatest interest. A good time to ask is when you are concluding a meeting with a donor— For example, "What is the best way to keep you informed?"*
- *Start conducting communication debriefs internally after donor contacts to provide opportunities for reflection among the team.*
- *Enhance your own and encourage your team to enhance their knowledge about each current and prospective donors—go to their Website, read brochures, annual reports, talk with other NGOs. This knowledge will create more awareness and understanding about those from different backgrounds.*
- *Practice 'active listening' skills to improve your ability to communicate.*
- *Encourage your team to understand their own cultural attitudes and develop communication skills through training (for example, sharing the Ladder of Inference).*
- *Always check that you and everyone on the team have understood important points and instructions from donors.*

Wrap up

Communication goes in two directions. The clearer that both you and the donor are with one another, the more likely you both will be to avoid misunderstandings or confusion. Remember, a donor might have a preference. You might also have a preference!

MODULE 3.5e

Connecting with Donors

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

TIME

40 minutes

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✔ answer key questions to help decide whether to pursue a specific donor, and
- ✔ develop strategies to meet donor expectations and keep donors engaged.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Flipchart, markers, tape
- ☐ Handouts—***Key Questions to Answer Before Meeting a Donor; Ten Ways to Meet Donor Expectations***

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

If the group is small (3 or fewer) do this as a group exercise. If larger, break into pairs, each pair listing its ideas on a flipchart.

Give the group 3 minutes to brainstorm a checklist with at least 5 things to do to learn about a potential new donor before contacting them. Ask the teams to list their ideas on flipchart paper. After the brainstorm, distribute handouts and discuss what participants missed.

Say: Whether the donor is the U.S. government, a national or local government agency, a foundation or a business, donors are "investors" who help you achieve your mission. When you get results, donors do, too; when you succeed, they succeed. Like you, donors are held accountable and must show results to their funding sources.

It is essential to do homework to prepare to meet a prospective donor. You do not want to waste time—yours or theirs—pursing opportunities that do not match your mission or program expertise. So, it is important to answer the key questions **before** you contact and meet with a potential donor.

BRAINSTORM

Before you meet a donor

(Refer to handout for 10 questions to answer about a donor before pursing contact.)

1. What is their mission?
2. What are their specific topics of interest?
3. What type of support do they provide
4. Who are their beneficiaries?
5. What is their current funding strategy?
6. How much money or commodities do they donate every year?
7. What programs/organizations have they funded in the past?
8. What are their donation policies?
9. What is the application process?
10. What connections do they have, if any, to your organization? *(For example, do they have personal or professional relationships with Board members or staff?)*

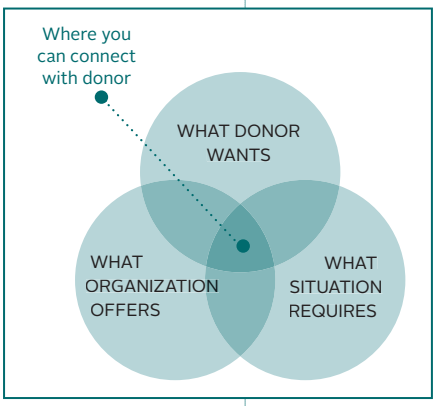
Hand out: *Key Questions to Answer Before Meeting a Donor*

Key Questions to Answer Before Meeting a Donor

It is essential to do homework to prepare to meet a new,

Answer the following questions before you contact and meet with a potential donor:

1. What is their mission?
2. What are their specific topics of interest?



Say: Doing this research is as essential to meeting in person as it is when writing a capability statement. You want to connect with the donor, to make the meeting worthwhile for both of you. That means thinking about how you can connect with or help solve the problem or address the issue most important to that donor.

Now, there are three additional questions that can help you decide whether to go pursue that donor or not. *(Draw on flipchart a Venn diagram showing where the 3 circles overlap)*

1. What does the donor want?
2. What does the situation require?
3. What does our organization have to offer?

Where the answers to these three questions overlap, are the areas you should focus on in requesting a meeting with a donor. For example: If a donor wants to fund male circumcision projects in your area and you have experience motivating men to participate in family planning, you can describe your work with men so that it connects with that donor.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

If the group is small (3 or fewer) do this as a group exercise. If larger, break into pairs, each pair listing its ideas on a flipchart.

Give the group 3 minutes to brainstorm a checklist with at least 5 other things to do to prepare for a meeting with a potential new donor. Ask the teams to list their ideas on flipchart paper. When time is up, ask each participant to silently review the list(s) and put a check mark by the top 5 ideas. Discuss those that get the most votes.

BRAINSTORM

Five more ways to prepare for a donor meeting

Five ways to prepare for a meeting with a donor:

1.
2.
3
4.
5.

(Suggested responses to supplement those of participants.)

- *When planning a visit, always ask how much time the donor's representatives have available.*
- *Try to set aside 30 minutes to one hour for the first "getting acquainted" meeting. This is not the time to tell the donor everything about your NGO. Just as with a potential friend, developing a relationship with a donor takes time. You will likely need to meet with them several times before you get to the point where you should make a request.*
- *Find out who will attend the meeting. Do your homework. Tailor your presentation to the audience. Present more or less technical information based on their background and interest.*
- *Make sure all members of your delegation are clear on their roles.*
- *Share what you learned about the potential donor's vision, mission, interests and scope of work with all members of your delegation.*
- *Anticipate and prepare for any possible controversial or difficult questions that might be asked during the meeting.*
- *Try to keep to the agreed-upon amount of time for the meeting (Western donors typically are very sensitive about time), unless the donor has indicated she or he has plenty of time or would like to continue the discussion.*
- *At the end of the meeting, make arrangements for a follow-up meeting or identify and agree on next steps.*
- *When you meet with a potential donor, be sure to bring:*
  — business cards
  — paper copies of your presentation
  — relevant materials, such as a brochure, a poster, newspaper article, success story

Once you have established a relationship with a donor, it is important to your program's sustainability to keep the donor engaged.

EXERCISE

Brainstorm ways to engage donors

Discuss the top ideas and ask for specific ways the participants would implement them.

Say: As with any mutually beneficial relationship, it is easier to nurture and build on an established connection than to start from zero. Here are a few ways to reinforce your rapport with donors and meet their expectations.

Hand out: *Ten Ways to Meet Donor Expectations*

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

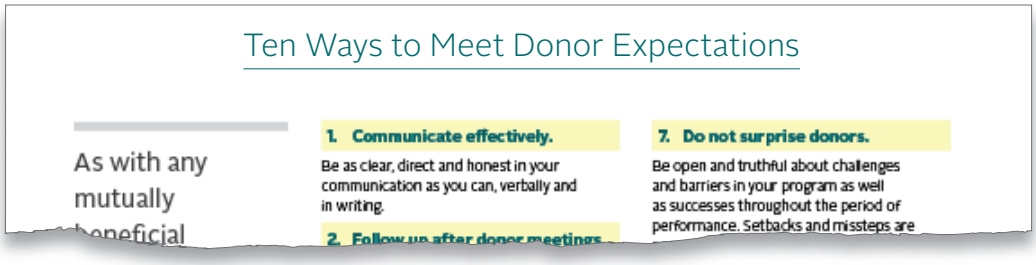
Give the group 3 minutes to brainstorm ideas for engaging donors. Ask the teams to list their ideas on flipchart paper. When time is up, ask each participant to silently review the list(s) and put a check mark by the top two ideas. (See box on the next page for ideas.)

Some Ways to Engage Donors

Some ideas to mention if they are not listed during the brainstorm:

1. Invite donors to your organization. Arrange site visits to connect them with program and other staff.
2. Invite donors to special events.
3. Go out to meet donors.
4. Keep in touch with donors using their preferred methods (email, phone, etc.).
5. Share proof, not just passion, about what you are accomplishing through success stories, testimonials from beneficiaries
6. Always thank donors for their generosity.
7. Recognize donors in ways that they approve of.
8. Do not burn any bridges. (Even if you did not win their support, thank the donors for considering your proposal.)

Review handout with participants.


Ten Ways to Meet Donor Expectations

As with any mutually beneficial

1. Communicate effectively.
Be as clear, direct and honest in your communication as you can, verbally and in writing.

2. Follow up after donor meetings

7. Do not surprise donors.
Be open and truthful about challenges and barriers in your program as well as successes throughout the period of performance. Setbacks and missteps are

Wrap up

By communicating effectively, a donor will see you as a reliable and trusted partner and may become both an important advocate for your organization and instrumental in sustaining its long-term financial health. Building a strong relationship through open, two-way communication is key to making this a reality. The confidence people have in an organization has a great deal to do with their loyalty to it and their willingness to support it.

What Matters Most?*

Directions

1. Answer each question in the list below with one phrase or sentence.
2. Rate each item from 1-10 (1 is the most important, 10 is the least important) according to how much it means to you.

Your answers will not be shared.

Example:

6	What language(s) do I speak?
	English, French, Russian

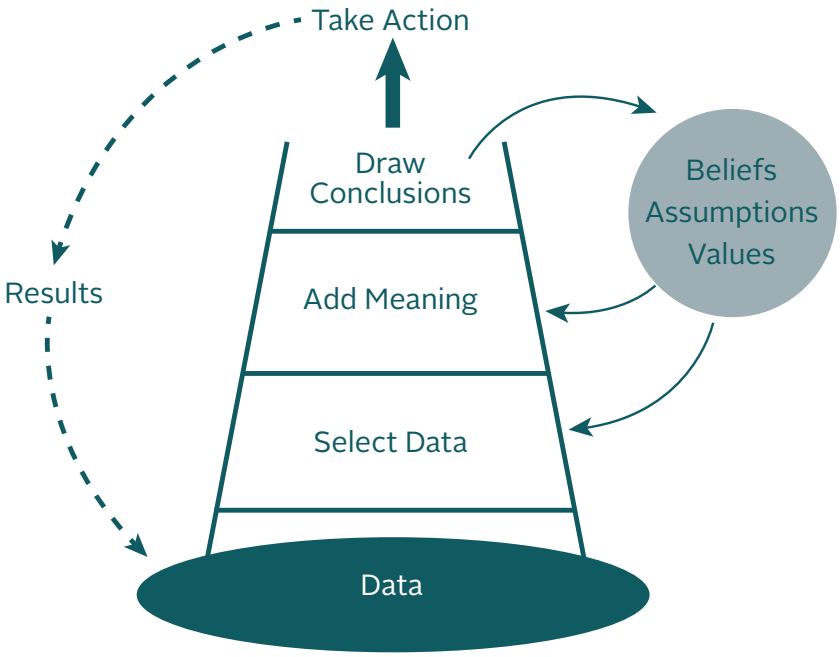
Rating (1 is most important, 10 is least)

	What language(s) do I speak?
	What is my religion?
	What music do I listen to?
	What foods do I eat at home?
	What do I wear on special occasions?
	What holidays and ceremonies are important to me?
	What is most important to me?
	What things do I believe are right and wrong?
	How important is my extended family?

* *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook.* Craig Storti. 2011. www.peacecorps.gov/wws/publications/culture/pdf/workbook.pdf (accessed 6.25.12)

The Ladder of Inference

The Ladder of Inference comes from Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization.* It describes the thinking process that we go through, usually without realizing it, to get from a fact to a decision or action. We move up and down the Ladder of Inference in **milliseconds** all day long. It happens when we interact with people, read email, and listen to the news. It also affects how others see us as they climb their own Ladders of Inference.



Based on: *The 5th Discipline Fieldbook,* Peter Senge, 1994.

The thinking process is seen as rungs on a ladder. Starting at the bottom of the ladder, we observe, see what happens, hear what is said, or experience a situation—no more and no less. From there, we:

- Select data. That is, narrow our focus by selecting (unconsciously) the data or information that interests us
- Add meaning, make assumptions, sometimes without considering them.
- Draw conclusions based on the interpreted facts and our assumptions.
- Develop beliefs based on these conclusions.
- Take actions that seem "right" because they are based on what we believe.

This can create a vicious circle. Our beliefs have a big impact on what we select from reality, and can lead us to ignore the real facts. Soon we are jumping to conclusions—by missing facts and skipping steps in the reasoning process. Remember, it is easy for us to **run up the ladder** and get things wrong even when we have the best of intentions.

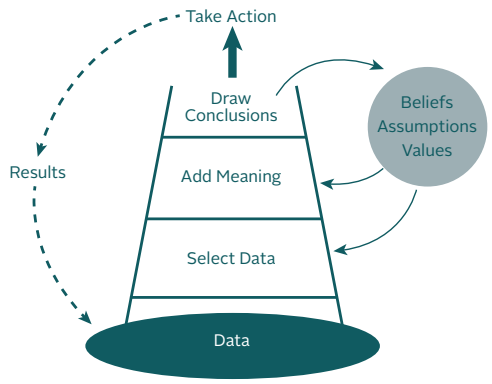
Between the Lines

Think about how culture and The Ladder of Inference interact in the following email written by Robert, an American who observed a meeting between international donors and local grantees from a developing country.

The meeting was set to begin at 9 AM. Donor representatives arrived early and were seated before the start time. Grantees began to arrive and sit down a few minutes after 9, others continued to trickle in until 10. Grantees were dressed in business clothes, the men wore ties and jackets. The donors were much more casual, none wore neckties. There were name cards at each seat. A copy of the participant list was handed out along with the agenda. The chairman, from a donor agency, waited five minutes before he began the meeting by reviewing the agenda. When asked if anyone wanted to add to the agenda, donors spoke up, no grantees did. For the next hour, donors spoke up, sometimes interrupting one another. Grantees sat at attention in their seats, speaking quietly and only when spoken to. As a result, I believe none of the grantees is interested in continuing their projects with the present donors.

—Robert

The Ladder of Inference



Based on: *The 5th Discipline Fieldbook*, Peter Senge, 1994.

You have 5 minutes to analyze Robert's reasoning as he climbed up the ladder, including the cultural assumptions you think lead to his conclusion that **"none of the grantees is interested in continuing their projects with the present donors."**

Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges

by Marcelle E. DuPraw and Marya Axner

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We all communicate with others all the time—in our homes, in our workplaces, in the groups we belong to, and in the community. No matter how well we think we understand each other, communication is hard. Just think, for example, how often we hear things like, "He doesn't get it," or "She didn't really hear what I meant to say." "Culture" is often at the root of communication challenges. Our culture influences how we approach problems, and how we participate in groups and in communities. When we participate in groups we are often surprised at how differently people approach their work together.

Culture is a complex concept, with many different definitions. But, simply put, "culture" refers to a group or community with which we share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world. It includes groups that we are born into, such as gender, race, or national origin. It also includes groups we join or become part of. For example, we can acquire a new culture by moving to a new region, by a change in our economic status, or by becoming disabled. When we think of culture this broadly, we realize we all belong to many cultures at once.

Our histories are a critical piece of our cultures. Historical experiences—whether five years ago or ten generations back—shape who we are. Knowledge of our history can help us understand ourselves and one another better. Exploring the ways in which various groups within our society have related to each other is key to opening channels for cross-cultural communication.

SIX FUNDAMENTAL PATTERNS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

In a world as complex as ours, each of us is shaped by many factors, and culture is one of the powerful forces that acts on us. Anthropologists Kevin Avruch and Peter Black explain the importance of culture this way: ...One's own culture provides the "lens" through which we view the world; the "logic"... by which we order it; the "grammar" ... by which it makes sense.[1] In other words, culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves.

As people from different cultural groups take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultural values sometimes conflict. We can misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships. Oftentimes, we aren't aware that culture is acting upon us. Sometimes, we are not even aware that we have cultural values or assumptions that are different from others'.

Six fundamental patterns of cultural differences—ways in which cultures, as a whole, tend to vary from one another—are described below. The descriptions point out some of the recurring causes of cross-cultural communication difficulties.[2] As you enter into multicultural dialogue or collaboration, keep these generalized differences in mind. Next time you find yourself in a confusing situation, and you suspect that cross-cultural differences are at play, try reviewing this list. Ask yourself how culture may be shaping your own reactions, and try to see the world from others' points of view.

1. Different Communication Styles

The way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of "yes" varies from "maybe, I'll consider it" to "definitely so," with many shades in between.

Another major aspect of communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication

includes not only facial expressions and gestures; it also involves seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time. In addition, different norms regarding the appropriate degree of assertiveness in communicating can add to cultural misunderstandings. For instance, some white Americans typically consider raised voices to be a sign that a fight has begun, while some black, Jewish and Italian Americans often feel that an increase in volume is a sign of an exciting conversation among friends. Thus, some white Americans may react with greater alarm to a loud discussion than would members of some American ethnic or non-white racial groups.

2. Different Attitudes Toward Conflict

Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. In the U.S., conflict is not usually desirable; but people often are encouraged to deal directly with conflicts that do arise. In fact, face-to-face meetings customarily are recommended as the way to work through whatever problems exist. In contrast, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning; as a rule, differences are best worked out quietly. A written exchange might be the favored means to address the conflict.

3. Different Approaches to Completing Tasks

From culture to culture, there are different ways that people move toward completing tasks. Some reasons include different access to resources, different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together.

When it comes to working together effectively on a task, cultures differ with respect to the importance placed on establishing relationships early on in the collaboration. A case in point, Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to attach more value to developing relationships at the beginning of a shared project and more emphasis on task completion toward the end as compared with European-Americans. European-Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task. This does not mean that people from any one of these cultural backgrounds are more or less committed to accomplishing the task, or value relationships more or less; it means they may pursue them differently.

4. Different Decision-Making Styles

The roles individuals play in decision-making vary widely from culture to culture. For example, in the U.S., decisions are frequently delegated—that is, an official assigns responsibility for a particular matter to a subordinate. In many Southern European and Latin American countries, there is a strong value placed on holding decision-making responsibilities oneself. When decisions are made by groups of people, majority rule is a common approach in the U.S.; in Japan consensus is the preferred mode. Be aware that individuals' expectations about their own roles in shaping a decision may be influenced by their cultural frame of reference.

5. Different Attitudes Toward Disclosure

In some cultures, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding, or about personal information. Keep this in mind when you are in a dialogue or when you are working with others. When you are dealing with a conflict, be mindful that people may differ in what they feel comfortable revealing. Questions that may seem natural to you—What was the conflict about? What was your role in the conflict? What was the sequence of events?—may seem intrusive to others. The variation among cultures in attitudes toward disclosure is also something to consider before you conclude that you have an accurate reading of the views, experiences, and goals of the people with whom you are working.

6. Different Approaches to Knowing

Notable differences occur among cultural groups when it comes to epistemologies—that is, the ways people come to know things. European cultures tend to consider information acquired through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring, more valid than other ways of coming to know things. Compare that to African cultures' preference for affective ways of knowing, including symbolic imagery and rhythm. Asian cultures' epistemologies tend to emphasize the validity of knowledge gained through striving toward transcendence.[3]

Recent popular works demonstrate that our own society is paying more attention to previously overlooked ways of knowing.[4] Indeed, these different approaches to knowing could affect ways of analyzing a community problem or finding ways to resolve it. Some members of your group may want to do library research to understand a shared problem better and

identify possible solutions. Others may prefer to visit places and people who have experienced challenges like the ones you are facing, and get a feeling for what has worked elsewhere.

RESPECTING OUR DIFFERENCES AND WORKING TOGETHER

In addition to helping us to understand ourselves and our own cultural frames of reference, knowledge of these six patterns of cultural difference can help us to understand the people who are different from us. An appreciation of patterns of cultural difference can assist us in processing what it means to be different in ways that are respectful of others, not faultfinding or damaging.

Anthropologists Avruch and Black have noted that, when faced by an interaction that we do not understand, people tend to interpret the others involved as "abnormal," "weird," or "wrong."[5] This tendency, if indulged, gives rise on the individual level to prejudice. If this propensity is either consciously or unconsciously integrated into organizational structures, then prejudice takes root in our institutions—in the structures, laws, policies, and procedures that shape our lives. Consequently, it is vital that we learn to control the human tendency to translate "different from me" into "less than me." We can learn to do this.

We can also learn to collaborate across cultural lines as individuals and as a society. Awareness of cultural differences doesn't have to divide us from each other. It doesn't have to paralyze us either, for fear of not saying the "right thing." In fact, becoming more aware of our cultural differences, as well as exploring our similarities, can help us communicate with each other more effectively. Recognizing where cultural differences are at work is the first step toward understanding and respecting each other.

Learning about different ways that people communicate can enrich our lives. People's different communication styles reflect deeper philosophies and world views which are the foundation of their culture. Understanding these deeper philosophies gives us a broader picture of what the world has to offer us.

Learning about people's cultures has the potential to give us a mirror image of our own. We have the opportunity to challenge our assumptions about the "right" way of doing things, and consider a variety of approaches. We have a chance to learn new ways to solve problems that we had previously given up on, accepting the difficulties as "just the way things are."

Lastly, if we are open to learning about people from other cultures, we become less lonely. Prejudice and stereotypes separate us from whole groups of people who could be friends and partners in working for change. Many of us long for real contact. Talking with people different from ourselves gives us hope and energizes us to take on the challenge of improving our communities and worlds.

FOOTNOTES

1. Avruch, Kevin and Peter Black, "Conflict Resolution in Intercultural Settings: Problems and Prospects," in **Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application,** edited by Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
2. This list and some of the explanatory text is drawn from DuPraw and Warfield (1991), an informally published workshop manual co-authored by one of the authors of this piece.
3. Nichols, Edwin J., a presentation made to the World Psychiatric Association and Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria, November 10, 1976.
4. For example, for research on women's approaches to knowledge, see
   - Lorraine Code, **What Can She Know?: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge.** Ithaca: Cornell, 1991
   - M.F. Belenky, N.R. Goldberger, & J. M. Tarule, **Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of the Self, Voice and Mind.** New York: Basic Books, 1986
   - Carol Gilligan, **In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.** Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1982.
5. Avruch and Black, 1993.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Seven Tips to Improve Communication with International Donors

Consider these tips a starting point. Although they suggest some useful DO's and DON'Ts for facilitating communication with international donors, remember, a list of behaviors or a script cannot prepare you for every situation. What is a "do" in one set of circumstances might very well be a "don't" in another.

1. Take it slow.

A common objection that non-native speakers raise is the speed with which native speakers tend to communicate. Whether you are speaking to someone who is just beginning to learn a language or a long-time English speaker who hails from a different culture, it is helpful to modulate the pace of your speech. If you are speaking with a donor who is not fluent in your language, slow down your own speed. If you are not fluent in the donor's language and he or she is speaking too quickly, politely ask him or her to slow down. Remember, communication is a two-way street. Speakers often do not realize listeners do not understand unless you tell them.

2. Practice active listening; check meaning.

An effective strategy for improving cross-cultural communication is what experts call "active listening." This technique involves restating the other speaker's statements to ensure you understand their meaning and asking frequent questions. This is a great way to ensure that important information doesn't "slip through the cracks" in a cross-cultural conversation. For example, "Am I correct in understanding that you want us to arrange a meeting with you next month after we receive approval for our workplan?"

3. Separate questions.

Try not to ask double questions such as, "Do you want to carry on our discussion or shall we stop here?" In a cross-cultural situation the listener may have understood the first or second question. Let your listener answer one question at a time.

4. Group information in 'bite-size' pieces.

Even a single sentence in a conversation between two fluent speakers can contain a great deal of information. That is why cross-cultural communication experts recommend limiting the amount of information you try to convey at one time. Stick to simple, direct instructions and explanations. Try to avoid complex, multi-part sentences.

5. Watch out for cultural assumptions.

If you have ever traveled to a foreign country, you probably realize just how much of our verbal and non-verbal communication relies on a shared set of cultural beliefs and attitudes. When you are speaking to someone from another culture, try to avoid things like jokes, slang or references that might be confusing or misleading to a non-native speaker.

6. Write it down.

If you are unsure whether something has been understood write it down and check. This can be useful when using large figures. For example, ten thousand in the USA is written 10,000.00. In France it is written 10.000,00. (The use of comma and decimal point is different.)

7. When in doubt, opt for friendly formality.

North American English speakers often adopt a casual, informal approach to conversations, even when they are addressing a stranger or a new acquaintance. This might be confusing to you if you are not familiar with North American culture. Remember, your job is to cement the connection between donors and the NGO for which you work. That is where your effort should be directed. Always keep the relationship professional, use a more formal mode of speaking and gradually scale back the level of formality as the relationship develops.

Sample Donor Communications Management Plan Matrix

Name of donor: **USAID** Project: **Build agricultural skills for OVC caregivers** Date: **8 August 2012**

External Point of Contact (POC)	Communication Type	Objective(s) of Communication	Medium	Frequency	Audience	Owner	Deliverable
Executive Director	Kickoff Meeting	Introduce the project team to funder. Review project objectives and management approach.	Face-to-face	Once	• Funder-USAID • Project Team	• Project Manager • Technical Lead	Agenda Meeting minutes
Communication Coordinator	Project brochure	Introduce project objectives to prospective beneficiaries.	Print	Once	• Prospective beneficiaries • Funder • Stakeholders	• Project Manager • Communication Manager	Brochure
Communication Coordinator	Website	Build awareness of our organization. Distribute information.	Internet	Update monthly	• Funder • Stakeholders • Prospective beneficiaries • Prospective funders	• Communication Manager	Web content
Communication Coordinator	Success story	Capture evidence of progress, positive change.	Internet Print/news release	As often as possible or semi-annual	• Funder • Stakeholders • Beneficiaries • General public	• Communication Manager	Story
Executive Director, Program Manager	Project Status Meetings	Discuss progress and technical design solutions for the project.	Face to face Conference call	As needed	• Project Technical Staff • Funder	• Program Manager • Technical Lead	Agenda Meeting minutes
Financial Manager	Financial Reports	Report on the status of the project to management.	U.S. government form	Quarterly	• Funder-USAID	• Financial Manager	SF425
Program Manager	Program Reports	Report the status of the project including activities, progress, costs and issues.	Email	Semi-annual	• Funder-USAID • Project Team • Stakeholders	• Program Manager • Technical Lead	Project report

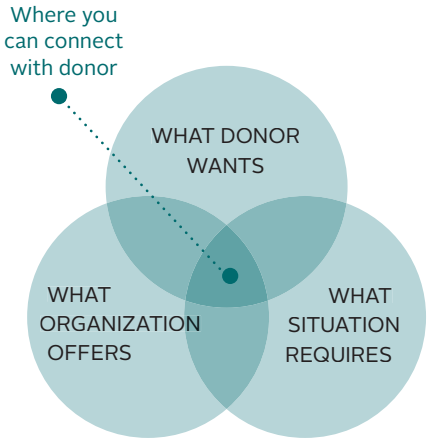
Donor Communications Management Plan Matrix

Name of donor: _____ Project: _____ Date: _____

External Point of Contact (POC)	Communication Type	Objective(s) of Communication	Medium	Frequency	Audience	Owner	Deliverable

Key Questions to Answer Before Meeting a Donor

It is essential to do homework to prepare to meet a new, prospective donor. You do not want to waste time—yours or theirs—pursing opportunities that do not match your mission or program expertise.



Answer the following questions before you contact and meet with a potential donor:

1. What is their mission?
2. What are their specific topics of interest?
3. What type of support do they provide
4. Who are their beneficiaries?
5. What is their current funding strategy?
6. How much money or commodities do they donate every year?
7. What programs/organizations have they funded in the past?
8. What are their donation policies?
9. What is the application process?
10. What connections do they have, if any, to your organization? (For example, do they have personal or professional relationships with Board members or staff?)

Doing this research is as essential to meeting face-to-face as it is when writing a capability statement. You want to connect with the donor, to make the meeting worthwhile for both of you. That means thinking about how can connect with or help solve the problem or address the issue most important to that donor. To help you decide whether to go pursue that donor or not, create three short lists:

1. What does the donor want?
2. What does the situation require?
3. What does our organization have to offer?

Where the answers to these three questions overlap is the area you should focus on in requesting a meeting with a donor:

Ten Ways to Meet Donor Expectations

As with any mutually beneficial relationship, it is easier to nurture and build on an established connection than to start from zero. Here are a few tips to reinforce your rapport with major donors.

By communicating effectively, a donor will see you as a reliable and trusted partner and may become both an important advocate for your organization and instrumental in sustaining its long-term financial health. Building a strong relationship through open, two-way communication is key to making this a reality. The confidence people have in an organization has a great deal to do with their loyalty to it and their willingness to support it.

1. Communicate effectively.

Be as clear, direct and honest in your communication as you can, verbally and in writing.

2. Follow up after donor meetings.

After key meetings or conversations between the leadership of your organization and the donor, send a written summary of key issues discussed and follow-up actions. This creates a record of the meeting and clarifies decisions and actions that will be taken in the future.

3. Be responsive to donor requests.

When a donor requests information, respond quickly. Ask questions to ensure you understand what is being requested and when it is due. If a request is unrealistic, be honest and explain why. If it will take you some time to compile the information requested, be clear about when you can submit it.

4. Make realistic promises and deliver on them.

Be careful not to compromise the quality of your work for the sake of speed. Thus, when facing a deadline, ensure you can deliver what you promise with a worthwhile product. If this is not possible, be honest about it.

5. Use donor funds as expected.

Implement your program as described in your proposal; that is what your donor "bought." Notify the donor of any needed alterations (for example, changes in scope, location of work, target audience) to your work right away in order to get guidance on how the donor would like you to proceed.

6. Submit accurate, complete program deliverables on time.

Reports and other deliverables document your program accomplishments and successes. Therefore, it is critical that deliverables are clear, well-written and without errors so that they reflect well on your organization and may be shared with other funders and stakeholders. Emphasize quality over quantity. Meet the deadlines set by your donor as this demonstrates your professionalism, reliability and responsiveness. Know your donors well enough to link their support with your organization's activities, progress and results they find most meaningful.

7. Do not surprise donors.

Be open and truthful about challenges and barriers in your program as well as successes throughout the period of performance. Setbacks and missteps are normal and most donors understand the challenging environment in which you work. If you maintain an open and collaborative relationship, there should be no surprises when your donor receives your deliverables.

8. Share your achievements. Recognize and give credit to donors.

Tell your organization's story and disseminate program results broadly and through a variety of media—newspapers, radio, Web sites, social media, conferences, meetings, special events. Make sure your donor's support is always acknowledged in accordance with your marking and branding plan as necessary and thank the donor for their support. In addition, you may wish to invite your donor to participate in events, conferences or meetings where you present program findings and results.

9. Take solutions a step further.

Suggest ways in which you can eliminate a problem and articulate how you can share new knowledge with other stakeholders to support lasting solutions. Identify gaps in your present program or interventions, and recommend a new direction or strategy for greater effectiveness. Also, take time to reflect on the approaches that did not have the intended result and note them along with other "lessons learned" that you can compile at the end of the program. These types of proactive approaches may influence donor priorities in future years.

10. Prepare for visitors and opportunities to showcase your program.

Your local, national and global reputation and image can be affected by the impressions made in known and spontaneous interactions with high level officials, international and local visitors in addition to new staff. A well-organized and informative introduction and site visit with program stakeholders is an important way to communicate your successes and needs. Always plan ahead and have strong speakers available to showcase your work to visitors, potential donors and advocates.

References and Resources

How to Craft an Elevator Speech
http://www.creativekeys.net/PowerfulPresentations/article1024.html

Creating your Elevator Speech
http://www.creativity-portal.com/articles/jonathan-vehar/value-elevator-speech.html

Elevator Pitch Essentials. Chris O'Leary
http://www.elevatorpitchessentials.com/essays/ElevatorPitch.html

NPI-Connect.Net—eNewsletters:
Issue 43: Managing Your Relationship with Your Donors
Issue 45: Advancing your Cause by Pitching your Program
Issue 28: Success Story Reporting

Network for Good
www.fundraising123.org

"Ensuring Successful Partnerships: A Toolkit"
www.interaction.org/document/ensuring-successful-partners-toolkit
Originally developed as part of InterAction's Africa Liaison Program Initiative (ALPI) to foster relationships between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and nongovernmental organizations in the U.S. and Africa, the Ensuring Successful Partnerships Toolkit includes: a list of recommended commitments for organizations to make before beginning the partnership assessment process; the principles necessary to build and sustain successful partnerships; and an actual partnership assessment tool.

Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook. Craig Storti. 2011. www.peacecorps.gov/wws/publications/culture/pdf/workbook.pdf (accessed 6.25.12)