Concept Note

Time	Event	Content
1 hour & 30 min	*Session 12* **Concept Note Working with Partners; Approaching Donors**	• Overview of Day 2 • Objectives of Day 3 • What is a concept note? • Working with partners (Group discussion) • What makes projects attractive to donors (Group discussion) • How to identify potential donors • Building relationships with donors (Group discussion)
1 hour	*Session 13* **Concept Note Case Studies**	• Elements of good concept notes • Checklist of a convincing concept note
1 hour & 45 min	*Session 14* **Drafting Concept Note**	• Participants draft their own concept note in consultation with the trainers and resource persons as needed
1 hour	*Session 15* **Sharing Concept Notes**	• Presentation and analysis of participants' concept note
15 min	**End of Day 3**	• Reflection on Day 3 • Mid-course evaluation: Keep, Stop, Start doing • Overview of Day 4

Developing a Concept Note

Objectives

By the end of Day 3 you will:

- be able to discuss what you need for a concept note
- be able to explain the difference between a concept note and a full project proposal
- draft a concept note for your own project

Activities

Session 12 Working with Partners; Approaching Donors, Concept Note
Activity 22: Reflect on your partnership experience

Session 13 Concept Note Case Studies
Activity 23: List the key elements of an effective concept note

Session 14 Drafting a Concept Note
Activity 24: Draft a concept note for your project

Session 15 Sharing a Concept Note
Assessing the project concept
Activity 25: Assess a concept note

Resources

Handouts:

- Concept Note Template (DFID)
- Information about Stakeholders
- Planning Stakeholder Consultations
- Stakeholder Strengths and Resources

Further resources

Partnership handouts:

- Assessing Your Partnership Capacity
- Assessing Benefits of a Partnership
- Record of Previous Work with Partners
- Partnership Guidelines
- Timetable for Finalising Partnerships

Donor handouts:

- Donor Contact File
- Record of Contacts with Prospective Donors
- Donor Agency File

Session 12
Working with Partners; Approaching Donors

Objectives

By the end of this session you will be able to:
- define what a concept note is
- explain why stakeholder involvement is critical in the development of a concept note
- explain why it is important to consider donor's priorities in developing a concept note
- discuss the purpose of a concept note in proposal development
- list and describe the elements of an effective concept note

Having completed a draft design of your project idea, now you have a solid foundation that you can use to develop your *concept note* which is the first step towards a project proposal for securing resources through a grant. Based on the guidelines provided in the following two sessions, you will be able to develop an effective concept note for your own project by the end of this day.

This session provides a set of steps you can follow to develop a sound project concept:
(1) Examine why working with partners
(2) Approaching donors
(3) Elements of effective concept notes

What is a Project Concept Note?

A project concept describes the ideas about what can be done within a specified period of time, to deal with a particular problem or situation; a situation that requires more time and resources than are normally available to an organization. In other words, the project concept represents a collective vision of those directly involved in planning the project, and describes the rationale, goals, objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the project.

It is essential to have a project concept in place before writing a project proposal. Therefore the first and most important step in writing an effective project proposal is to develop a sound *project concept*.

In order to develop a concept note you would need to take a stock of your stakeholders again, and consider identifying appropriate partners as most donors make partnership as a requirement. You would not be able to develop your concept note, however, without knowing what donor(s) you want to submit it. For this purpose, you need to select donors whose priorities are close to or matching with your priorities.

Working with partners

Several actors are required

In real life several events and meetings transpire before the project proponents decide on how to address the problems. As you experienced in Day 1 and Day 2 you need to follow several steps after deciding on the project goal before you have a draft project design at hand which is the foundation or the beginning of your *project concept.*

Roles of different actors

Generally speaking, a sound project concept usually emerges from a project design process involving the actions and deliberations of many people. As you could see in Day 1 and day 2, these people have to identify a strategy or strategies to bring about the necessary change in the problem or situation.

Strategies may include research to obtain better information about possible causes of the situation and possible solutions, or, they may be actions to implement the best solution based on the findings of research already conducted.
As you could already see (Session 9: Roles and Responsibilities), there are three main categories of 'actors' that have an important role in defining the problem and identifying possible solutions, and eventually in contributing to the concept note development. These include i) project proponents, ii) project stakeholders, and iii) project partners.

Table 7. Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics
1. Passive Participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
2. Participation in Information Giving	People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.
3. Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views. These external professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Much on-farm research falls in this category, as farmers provide the fields but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. Functional Participation	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organization. Such involvement does not tend to be at early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.
6. Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power.

Sometimes a project concept may be fairly well developed by one organization before it is recognized that other partners will be needed to provide essential expertise and resources. Usually (but not always), you should confirm the partner's commitment before you submit your proposal to a donor.

Now, let's consider how to identify and collaborate with partners:

Consult and build support among the stakeholders

You have already identified the stakeholders of your project and the reasons for their interest. Now, we will explore strategies for engaging, consulting with and building support among stakeholders.

Typology of participation

Given that donor organizations often regard stakeholder involvement and participation as a critical component in the success of projects, it is worth considering for a moment the 'Typology of Participation'[4]. This definition is drawn from the work of development organizations and reflects the assumption that there are basically seven ways that the term 'participation' can be interpreted.

The types of participation range from passive participation, where people are involved merely by being told what is to happen, to self-mobilization, where people take initiatives independently of external institutions. It should be evident from the Table that this typology can be useful in determining the level of participation that is required for a given project, furthermore the aims of the project might also reflect a desire to mobilise a community towards more independent action.

Typically the approach of stakeholder consultation (number 3 in the typology as shown in Table 7) will be used in the development of project proposals participation. Types of stakeholder consultation will be considered in some detail in the following section.

Types of stakeholder consultation

For reasons mentioned above, it is ideal to involve stakeholders in the early stages of project planning. Stakeholders can provide the insight needed to help you determine whether your project is viable and relevant. Stakeholders can identify potential obstacles to the success of the project, and they may have good ideas about how to strengthen it.

Do not assume that because an individual or group has a stake in the project that they are necessarily supporters of it. Certain stakeholders may feel they will be negatively impacted by a project, particularly if they do not yet have very much information about the project. Their concerns should be known in advance. There are really two stages involved in stakeholder consultation – one involves establishing that there is support for the project – and the other entails translating that support into practical terms.

Suggested strategies for establishing support include:

Holding a stakeholder forum – a meeting among stakeholders and project proponents

The objectives include:

- to share basic information about the project
- to address stakeholders' issues and identify any concerns
- to invite their input regarding the project
- to build support for the project

A stakeholder forum can generate good ideas and enthusiasm, because of the synergy that is created through this type of consultation. The forum can be held face to face, or at a distance, using communications technology. A stakeholder forum might take place over a number of stages, local meetings can be held in preparation for a larger regional gathering, outreach and information is important so that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the principal issues as this can help to avoid confusion in discussions. It is also important that all stakeholders understand the objective of the consultation, in setting the agenda for discussion the expectations of all groups should be considered.

It is worth mentioning that some tension or conflict is not unusual when different stakeholder groups are brought together in a forum for the first time, often this is because of mutual suspicion or mistrust. However through dialogue, what often happens is that different groups begin to see that they have shared views and objectives and are not on opposing sides of an issue. Careful preparation and facilitation is essential to enable the resolution of issues or conflict. In selecting a venue for a stakeholder forum, you may wish to consider a location that is neutral and does not represent a particular authority or interest.
Sometimes a stakeholder forum is the first opportunity for organizations to meet to discuss common problems, so it is an important stimulus to communication and collaboration among different groups.

A face-to-face meeting allows for more interaction in casual settings, and the possibility of working in smaller groups or teams. When a face-to-face meeting is not feasible, a distance forum can be conducted by e-mail, computer conferencing or a series of audio conferences. In either case, the gathering should have clear objectives and enable broad consultation among the participants.

Meeting with representatives of each stakeholder individually

You may decide to hold meetings with stakeholders individually for a number of reasons.

First, at certain stages of project planning you may wish to discuss specific issues with one stakeholder that has no relevance to other stakeholders. Separate meetings can be used to enable stakeholders to provide feedback on project design or implementation. For example, in the case study, it would not be necessary to organise a meeting between forestry workers and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans if the objective is to discuss how best to train government monitors in water quality assessment. On the other hand, if the project requires that forestry workers must collaborate with the environmental monitors, then a meeting between these organizations might help to determine the best means for collaboration.

Second, meetings with individual stakeholders can be used to discuss how that stakeholder might be able to support the project.

Third, you may wish to meet with stakeholders separately if they have a history of conflict. The risk of holding a stakeholder forum in this situation is that a positive outcome could be prevented if the two (or more) opposing groups dominate the meeting. In this case it may be more appropriate to discuss with the individual stakeholders how the project could help to meet their needs while reconciling the conflicting interests. If you can demonstrate how the project will produce a ‘win-win situation’, it is likely that the stakeholders will endorse the project and help to ensure its success. After each of these stakeholders has endorsed the project, you may be able to hold a successful stakeholder forum, if desired.

Translating support into practice

In projects as in other situations, sometimes there is a gap between an enthusiastic response to an idea and the willingness to help make it happen. Inviting stakeholders to participate in some way in the project is a way of recognising their unique role and the contribution they can make. Table 8 gives some examples of how stakeholders can make important contributions to a project with their particular strengths.

The 'Information about Stakeholders' and 'Planning Stakeholder Consultations' handouts are a template to assist you in identifying stakeholder contributions and planning stakeholder consultations for your projects.

Stakeholder participation as a major project component

Frequently in the implementation of major projects stakeholder participation forms a significant element of the work programme. Conservation activities that require the consent and co-operation of different groups of stakeholders often build in a component of participation as a key project activity. This achieves a number of objectives – perhaps the most important of which is the creation of a positive feedback loop as part of the project management cycle. The development of a public (or stakeholder) participation strategy could be the objective of a project itself or might be designed to generate more detailed project ideas around a particular issue or geographical region. One example is the Danube River Basin Strategy for Public Participation in River Basin Management Planning 2003 – 2009[4].

Table 8. Stakeholder Strengths, Resources and Contributions

Stakeholder strengths	**Potential contribution to the project**
• local knowledge: familiarity with the context and needs of the situation addressed by the project	• a 'reality check': honest feedback based on knowledge of the situation; • connections with people directly affected by the project
• linkages with other local agencies, such as government, other organizations	• capacity to reach a broader network when required
• facilities, such as a workplace or meeting place	• use of facilities for project activities, for example providing a space for a learning centre
• people with expertise in a specific area	• access to experts as general advisors, in specific roles, such as local consultants to the project team or as mentors in a learning project
• recognized leadership in a particular geographical area or disciplinary field	• letters of support from a respected source
Stakeholder resources	**Potential contribution to the project**
• financial resources	• provision of financial support for the project
• community resources e.g. land	• provision of land or other in-kind contribution

Consult with prospective project partners

Many projects involve several organizations working in partnership because the project benefits from the combined expertise, resources, networking and outreach capabilities of all the partners. Let's explore some options for partnerships.

[4] Pretty, Jules N, Guijt, I, Scoones, Ian, and Thompson J 1995. A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action, International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

Why working with partners?

As the project proponent, you should have an idea of the kind of resources and expertise the project requires. If these resources cannot be found within your own organization, you may decide to seek out an appropriate partner. The first step is to decide what you need from a partner. Partners can strengthen a project in the following ways as given in Table 9.

Requirements for collaboration with partners

Collaboration is challenging and time consuming, but it also brings rewards by broadening the scope and capacity of partners.

The challenge of working in a partnership arrangement is that there are inherent contradictions when organizations accustomed to operating independently begin to work together. Because a partnership includes a broader range of resources and perspectives than is available within one organization, each partner has different goals, organizational structures, values and management approaches. This diversity can bring additional strengths, but it also requires a commitment to develop common understandings where these are essential for the project and to respect differences that are not relevant to the project.

For the above reasons, it is important to assess whether a partnership is viable, early in the project development process.
Keep in mind:

- The objectives of the collaboration must be clearly defined, written down, and communicated to all the participants (this is called the partnership agreement, operating principles or memorandum of understanding)
- The mission statement of the collaborative enterprise should contain both short-term and long-term objectives
- There has to be a clearly established benefit for every participating institution (or organization)
- The smaller the initial group of participants, the greater the likelihood of success
- There must be a champion of the enterprise in every participating institution – a senior person with the time, commitment, and authority to see the project through to completion. The more senior in rank the better. There must also be staff who have the expertise as well as a clearly defined authority to make the project work. These people must trust each other
- Each partner should be required to contribute some resource to the endeavour. Ritual declarations of a desire to collaborate are not enough
- Be prepared to invest extra time in obtaining support, building trust and getting the work done

The ‘Partnership Guidelines’ handout provides some tips on how to achieve effective collaboration with partners. Remember to use these tips when deciding whether to collaborate on a project you develop in the future, or are currently developing.

Table 9. Partners Strengths, Resources and Benefits

Partner strengths and resources	Benefits to the project
Enhanced resources	The partner brings additional capacity, building on the same strengths already available to the project proponent. For example, if a project needs five biologists with expertise in water quality assessment for fisheries and your organization has only three, a partner could provide the two additional experts needed.
Complementary resources	The partner adds different strengths not already available to the project proponent. For example, if a project requires expertise in slope stabilisation, and the project proponent does not have this specialty, it seeks a partner with strength in this field.
Agency	The partner has the ability to act in an area that is beyond the jurisdiction or mandate of the proponent. For example, if a project in streambed restoration must include several districts in order to be effective, it would be advisable to include partners from each district.
Networking	The partner brings the ability to connect different fields of interest. Organizations tend to have linkages with others in their field. By involving a partner organization from another field, it is possible to expand the possible area of impact of the project. For example, an environmental organization working in partnership with an educational organization increases the likelihood that the project will engage both the environmental and educational communities.
Outreach	Some partners can increase the project's ability to reach a broad range of stakeholders or project beneficiaries. For example, an organization that is based in one major centre may choose a partner organization that is decentralised and has many local centres if the project requires broadly based data collection or information provision.

Timetable for partnership arrangements

It is important to develop a timetable for deciding any outstanding issues regarding project partnerships. If your role is primarily to develop a project proposal and you are not directly involved in the project planning process, you will need to know, from the project proponents, their timetable for finalising partnership agreements.

The 'Timetable for Finalising Partnership Arrangements' handout provides you with a framework for expanding and nurturing your network of partners. You may wish to use this framework in your own planning process for a project concept you are developing.

Summary notes on partnership

Partnerships need to be based on common goals that are intrinsically important to each organization and that go beyond simply meeting a requirement for project funding.

Identifying partners and defining partnerships requires a great deal of input from you and others involved, and in a sense is a microcosm of what's involved in collaborative projects. Time and patience are required to be successful. Each of the partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries has a role to play

in the project, and that role should be fairly clearly defined during the project planning process, prior to applying for funding.
Resources recommended for working with stakeholders, partners:

- Handout: Information about Stakeholders
- Handout: Planning Stakeholder Consultations
- Handout: Stakeholder Strengths and Resources
- Handout: Assessing Your Organization's Partnership Capacity
- Handout: Assessing the Potential Benefits of Partnerships
- Handout: Record of Previous Work with Partners
- Handout: Partnership Guidelines
- Handout: Timetable for Finalising Partnership

By the time you have developed a sound project concept and have identified the roles and contributions of partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries, drafted a logframe and a budget, you are in a good position to conduct an informed search for an appropriate donor.

We will provide you here with some tools to assist you in identifying and approaching potential donors for a project. A donor is any agency that provides financial support for a project, and can include governmental organizations, intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, foundations and for-profit organizations.

In many cases, those directly involved in or affected by a project provide some financial support for it. These are typically called in-kind contributions/self-financing parts. This unit deals specifically with donors who are NOT directly involved in the project.

Please note: People often discuss project ideas with their contacts in funding institutions before they have a sound project concept in place. This is an excellent way to determine whether your initial project ideas have potential to receive funding.

Approaching donors

Who funds projects?

Funding for projects can come from a variety of different sources, generally falling into the following categories:

- Multinational organizations
  - National government agencies, such as DFID (Department for International Development, UK), BMZ (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung - Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany), GTZ - German Agency for Technical Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), Germany; SIDA, (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sweden),USAID (US Agency for International Development, USA) etc.
  - International agencies, such as UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), European Commission, GEF (Global Environment Facility), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) etc.

- Non profit, non government organizations (NGOs)
  - National NGOs
  - International NGOs

- Private foundations
  –For example, the MacArthur Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Aga Khan Foundation,Abu-Dhabi Charitable Foundation, King Faisal Charitable Foundation, etc

Some agencies, such as the major development banks (the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank) provide long term loans for projects. In some circumstances, the development banks also provide some grants for technical assistance or needs assessment initiatives. Other funding agencies provide project grants that do not have to be repaid. All funding agencies require *accountability* from recipients, which means they must be able to show that they used the money responsibly to undertake planned project activities to achieve the stated project goals. Often funding agencies reserve the right of implementing financial audits during and after the completion of a project.

Some of the larger funding agencies provide financial support for projects in a very broad range of fields; health, education, environment, social development, administration, and so on. On the other hand, many agencies direct their funding only to projects in specific fields, for example, only to environmental projects. Print directories of funding agencies and websites publish information about funding agencies, their mandates and types of projects they will consider supporting. Among the many types of funding agencies, there are commonly accepted expectations of applicants for funding. These requirements are usually outlined in agencies’ instructions for applicants and in funding application forms.

Identify potential donors using your current contacts

The process of finding sources of funding for a project has to be systematic, whether you are starting from known contacts or researching prospective donors from directories or websites.

First, keep in mind the following tips:

- Be sure to identify the donors that have a special interest in the areas addressed by your project. Carefully review the agency's statement of its goals and priorities, and determine how well your project fits these, by identifying the areas in which your project matches the donor’s goals.
- Review the funding guidelines for these agencies. Identify any exclusions that apply, based on geography, type of project, size of project, and so on. Eliminate these from the list.
- Review the list of projects that the agency has recently funded. You will be able to determine if they have funded projects in related areas.

Start with Current Contacts

There are several advantages to starting the search with those associated with the project.

First, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries can often identify potential donors from their own context or field of interest. By building on the connections of those closest to the project, you can focus the search for funding on organizations with a particular interest in the areas relevant to your project.

Representatives of the project team, stakeholders and project beneficiaries should all have names of relevant contacts to contribute. These may be individuals, such as members of professional organizations or colleagues that have interests relevant to the project. They may be agencies or organizations that are linked by work or common interests. If any of these contacts can provide linkages to other organizations, list these secondary contacts as well.

Generate the list of names first. When you have selected the most relevant potential donors, record their contact information in a contact file that you will find in Contact File handout.

The second reason to explore potential funding options with those closest to the project is that it will give you more experience in communicating with donors, finding out donors' priorities and assessing whether your project can fit with these priorities. These skills will be useful when obtaining information about donors that are not already known to you or your colleagues.

Build a Donor File

As you begin to collect information about potential donors and their priority areas as follows:

Example of a Donor File

Name of Organization: **Name of Contact:** **Primary contact** or **secondary contact:** **Address** **Phone:** **Fax:** **Email:** **Web site:** **Main areas of donor's interest, and how they best match the project:** **Other interests relevant to the project:** **Geographic focus:** **Size/scope of funded projects:** **Limitations:**

Researching potential donors beyond your current contacts

As you broaden the search for prospective donors, the same principle applies; that those most likely to fund the project are those with a particular interest in the issues the project addresses. Funding agencies are in the business of providing funds to support initiatives that match the agency's goals.

Common priorities among funding agencies are:

1. Broad participation and consultation in project design and implementation.
2. A follow-on effect from the project, which means the project extends beyond the immediate project context and timeframe. This is sometimes termed building capacity. An example is a project to train staff that are then able to train others.
3. Sustainability, which means that activities undertaken as part of the project will be able to continue after the project is concluded.
4. Inclusion of minorities and under-represented groups, such as women, in project design and implementation
5. Respect for human rights in all aspects of project design and implementation, especially research with human subjects.

6. Environmental soundness. Even projects that are not directly addressing environmental issues are normally required to demonstrate that the environmental impact has been considered, and if it is determined there will be an environmental impact, steps are included to mitigate any negative effects.

Sources of Funding Information

All funding agencies require accountability from recipients, which means they must be able to show that they used the money responsibly to undertake planned project activities to achieve the stated project goals. Among the many types of funding agencies, there are commonly accepted expectations of applicants for funding. These requirements are usually outlined in agencies' instructions for applicants and in funding application forms.

Donors publicise information about their priorities and application procedures to project proponents in a number of ways; 1) through listings in funding directories, 2) through their own publications, and, 3) increasingly, through websites.

Funding Directories

Directories of funding agencies are published by umbrella organizations that represent a selection of agencies with a common feature. Two examples are the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. There are also directories of funding organizations with a particular focus. For example, EFC publishes a directory of funding agencies that support environmental initiatives.

Although print and CD-ROM directories can be costly to purchase, many government and academic libraries make funding directories available to the public.

How to use a print directory of funding agencies?

When you first review a directory of funding sources, the amount of information available can seem overwhelming. There are several possible organizing principles for these directories. The donors may be listed alphabetically, by their area of interest, or by the country in which they are based. As well, the directory index may group donors together by area of interest, or by country. It is helpful to identify the organizing principle that suits your purposes.

If the directory provides only an alphabetical listing, examine several listings to determine the pattern, and to locate where in each listing you can find information about donors' interests and guidelines. As well, you should identify the area of the listing that defines any of that donors' limitations - for example, if they will fund only projects in Eastern Europe. When you scan the listings, keep notes on any agencies that seem to be appropriate in your donor file. This is quite a time-consuming task.

Many funding agencies also make information available through their own publications, in print and/or on a website. If there is a particular agency with areas of interest directly relevant to your field of work, it is worthwhile asking to be placed on that agency's mailing list, so that you receive information from them on a regular basis. Agency newsletters can provide valuable information about current funding priorities, special funding initiatives and projects currently supported by the agency, all of which give you useful background information about the donor.

CD ROM directories

CD ROM directories allow you to conduct an electronic search using keywords. They may not be as up to date as a website, but will probably be easier to search than a print directory.

Websites

With increasing use of the internet and the web, more funding agencies are publishing information on their own websites.

Locating the information you need through a website may take several stages. There are few comprehensive directories of donors available for free that provide complete information about each listing within the same website. Most of them require following links to other websites to get detailed information about individual donors.

It will require time and patience to follow up each link and check out each donor's website. Be sure to track which donors you have checked and which ones to follow up. As well, it is a good idea to save any website information you think might be relevant to your search, and/or print it out for future reference.

How to use website listings of funding agencies?

Some website funding agency listings are quite large and include a broad diversity of donors. Some of the same principles used to sort through print directories are also useful for websites, but, fortunately, the task can be simplified, especially if the directory allows you to search using keywords. These are words that are used to select certain agencies from the whole file. The keywords that you would use are those that are particularly relevant to the project concept or the context for the project. In some search systems, if the keyword consists of a phrase, you must use a plus sign (+) between each word so that the search locates only the whole phrase, not the individual words in it. For example, if a keyword was the phrase 'environmental assessment', unless it is written as 'environmental+assessment' the search may locate everything to do with the environment and everything to do with assessment, including many items not at all relevant to your search.

Tips on computer searches

There is often an option to refine the search by applying another set of keywords, or by providing a more complete phrase to define exactly what you are looking for.

If your computer system does not enable you to conduct a search on a website, you may still be able to conduct an electronic search. If you can download documents from a website, and convert them to a text file, word processing software will allow you to use the 'Find' function to locate documents that include a keyword or phrase relevant to your project.

Planning an approach to donors

Funding agencies see themselves as participating in a partnership with the agencies they support. While those implementing the project provide their ideas and hard work to achieve the project's stated goals, the donor's role is to provide the financial contribution.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the donors who may have an interest in your project, it is important to determine the best process for approaching each donor.

This section outlines a common protocol to follow when approaching prospective donors, but keep in mind that the specific protocol for each donor may vary.

Many donors recommend that project proponents take several preliminary steps prior to formally submitting a project proposal, because they need an expedient process to assess whether your project matches their goals and priorities, prior to sifting through a lengthy proposal. The steps include informal inquiry, formal inquiry and the submission of a proposal.

Informal Inquiry

Some donors feel more comfortable supporting a project when they know the organization that will be managing it, so obtaining funds often requires building a relationship with a potential donor before submitting a formal proposal.

The first inquiry to a potential donor may be termed an 'informal inquiry' but it still requires planning and preparation. As a prospective applicant, your goal is to start a dialogue with the appropriate people at the funding agency who can then tell you whether it is worthwhile submitting a more formal proposal to them.

Some funding agencies have staff with expertise in the areas of focus that they support, and may be very proactive in working with project proponents. For example, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), based in Canada, provides support for research initiatives, and 'its principal approach is to support projects and partnerships proposed by developing country research institutions'. IDRC describes the initial stages of working with project proponents as follows:

'Proposal preparation is a time consuming process, and IDRC pursues the process in stages. Proposals are commonly reviewed and revised several times before the final version is submitted for approval. This is done in close consultation with one or more of the IDRC's programme officers. IDRC programme officers are themselves researchers, and will act as a sounding board for the project ideas, help the researcher define a problem and advise on methodology to reach the desired objectives'.[5]

The larger intergovernmental agencies may not work as closely with prospective applicants. In these cases, anyone who has had project experience with these agencies would be a source of information about the best initial approach.

The initial approach can be made by fax or e-mail, or by phone, if the agency is within your own country and phone contact is feasible. It is essential to identify the name and/or the position of the person to contact. An initial contact that goes to the wrong person may be very difficult to trace, since the recipient will most likely forward your message to someone else in the organization. Most directories of donors list a contact name or position for initial inquiries. You should use this name or position for your first message, unless you have your own direct contact within that organization.

By the time you are ready to make contact with a donor, you and your colleagues may be so familiar with the project concept that you now discuss it in 'shorthand', using your own terms and phrases that assume knowledge of the project. When you prepare to approach a donor, it's important to realise that the donor has no prior knowledge of the project, and will need some background information in order to understand it. Acronyms and references will need to be explained. Consider how you would describe, in a few sentences, the basics of the project concept to someone who has no knowledge of the project,

[5] The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) http://www.crdi.ca/index_en.html (Accessed 14 June 2006)

or possibly, of the context. In preparation for your approach, it's helpful to put yourself in the place of the funding agency staff person you will be contacting.

If your organization has a clearly written mission statement, you might want to incorporate it into your description of the organization. As well, you should outline the organization's goals and primary activities, in terms relevant to the project. (For example, it may seem self-evident that a university's primary goal is education. But it is useful to convey relevant information about the institution's context, teaching and research specialties, and outreach programmes.)

Formal letter of inquiry

Most organizations must submit a preliminary letter of inquiry describing their proposed project. The inquiry process is an efficient way for those assessing the proposal to determine whether it meets the funding agency's basic criteria for funding. Proposals are generally highly competitive, and this is the first stage of the selection process.

Inquiry letters are typically one to three pages in length and explain the programme mission, the background of the organization, the activities to be supported, and the requested level of support.

Letters of inquiry are frequently accepted throughout the year, but it is best to check with the agency to determine whether deadlines apply. Be sure to allow plenty of time to discuss your letter and programme ideas with the donor. It is not unusual for project proponents to begin conversations with the funding agency many months before a full proposal is considered.

First, take a few minutes to write two or three sentences that describe the case study project in terms that will be clear to someone not familiar with the project. Ask someone who does not know the project to read your description and tell you what he or she understands about the project from your description. If their understanding is accurate, then your description has passed its first test. If the person has misunderstood anything, it helps you to identify what part of the description needs clarification.

Second, describe why you think the donor would be interested in your project in the next sentence or two. You have selected this donor based on specific criteria, so it is important to convey how this project matches the funding agency's priorities, as well as the size and scope of projects it supports. This demonstrates that you have researched the donor and that you have given careful consideration to approaching them.

Third, the final part of your message should indicate what you anticipate as the next steps. Some funding agencies specify how long it takes for them to respond to an informal inquiry; in these cases, it is prudent to follow their timelines. Otherwise, it is fair to state that you will be back in touch with the donor within a month, if you have not already heard from them. If you would like to have more information from the donor, such as their prospectus or application form, you should include this request in your message.

If you are making this initial informal inquiry by e-mail or fax, ideally, it should be no more than one full page. If you are contacting the donor by telephone, your notes can serve as a reference for the initial conversation. Remember to follow up a phone conversation with a letter or fax to confirm the conversation.

Here is a sample letter of inquiry:

Sample Enquiry Letter

Department of International Cooperation • Mainland University

Ms Marie Robert
Programme Director,
Champlain Foundation

Dear Ms Robert,

We are approaching the Champlain Foundation to assess your interest in a collaborative project to establish environmentally sound logging practices that will prevent future damage to fish habitat and to restore previously damaged rivers and streams, in the East Island/West Mainland region.

Begin with a concise explanation of the project.

The project has been developed as a result of extensive consultation with fishers, foresters, environmental consultants, community representatives and both the District and National governments. New legislation requires a change to the logging practices that have, in the past, damaged fish habitat and caused a rapid decline in fish stocks. This project is designed to support the rapid implementation of these new practices. By providing appropriate and accessible training for loggers, environmental monitors and former fisheries workers, the project will instil the knowledge and skills needed to support environmentally sound forestry and careful monitoring of watershed regions.

Provide background information about the rationale and goals for the project.

The project proponents are Mainland University, East Island College, District Government Ministry of the Environment and the National Government Ministry of Fisheries. In consultation with project partners and with stakeholders, the two educational institutions will develop two training programmes. One will train forestry workers in environmentally sound practices in riparian areas, in compliance with new forestry regulations, and a second programme will train environment monitors in water quality assessment in fish-rearing streams. Both programmes will use train the trainer approaches and open and distance learning in order to make the training as appropriate and accessible as possible, and to ensure consistent training of large numbers of participants.

Provide a brief outline of what the project will do.

Over a five year period, the programmes will reach an estimated 8500 forestry workers (85% of the total in the region), 200 full time government environmental monitors, and 1500 short term environmental monitors who were formerly fisheries workers. It is estimated the total project cost, over its five year life, will be in the region of US $600 000. Partners and stakeholders have already committed to contributing US $60 000 to the project.

Provide basic information on the scale of the project.

This project has several distinctive features. It will help to restore ecologically sensitive areas and will reinforce the sustainability of two significant resource-based industries through training that emphasises their mutual reliance on protecting the ecosystem that supports them. As well, by using train the trainer strategies and open and distance learning, the project will help to establish a continuing training culture in forestry and environmental monitoring in the region.

Describe the unique features of the project.

Mainland University will administer the project, in close consultation with the other partners. Mainland University is a large multi faculty university with 20 000 undergraduate students and 5 000 graduate students, an international reputation for its expertise in environmental studies, forestry and geology, and over 20 years' experience in providing distance education programmes to learners throughout the region. It has managed several similar projects of this nature and size: a four-year, US $600 000 project to expand and sustain rural health care practices, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and rural communities, and a US $400 000 project in innovative strategies for local economic development, in partnership with District Credit Unions, local governments and East Island College.

Establish the credibility of the project proponents.

The project partners recognize the Champlain Foundation's longstanding commitment to environmental issues, and note its special interest in linking conservation with commerce in forestry and fisheries. We believe this project is in keeping with the Champlain Foundation's general framework for projects in this area, and we would value an opportunity to discuss this project concept further with you.

Link the project to the donor's areas of interest.

I will be available at the contact numbers listed below for the next four weeks: I will be on leave from August 1 to 16, but my colleague, Ms Anna Simpson, will be able to handle any requests for further information during that time. I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Provide detailed contact information.

Yours truly,

Ms Martha Jones,
Director, International Projects
Department of International Cooperation
Mainland University
Phone:
Fax:
email:

☑ Activity 22

You will have a discussion in a small group to share experience related to the following three questions.

1. What types of benefits partners have brought to your projects (enhanced resources, complementary resources, agency, and/or outreach)?
2. What benefits did your organization bring to the project?
3. Can you think of an example of conflict among stakeholders from your own experience?

Session 13
Concept Note: Case Studies

Objectives

By the end of this session you will:
- develop a checklist of effective concept notes
- apply the knowledge by analyzing successful and failed concept notes on the basis of a jointly developed checklist of effective concept notes

This session gives you the opportunity of studying four real life concept notes. They demonstrate well written concepts for small and large projects. A quick overview will reveal their common structure. Further analysis will expose differences that are due to organizational priorities (proponent, partners, donors).

We provide you here with an example of a real life concept note from the region that is planned to support construction objectives.

Construction of Deir Ez-zur Sewage Treatment Plant

Protection of Water Resources of the Euphrates River

Project Concept Note

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of Housing and Construction[6]

Installation of Mechanical and Electrical Equipment

Damascus, Syria

September 2004

Project Proponent

Ministry of Housing and Construction, Syria
Office for International Co-operation and Project Coordination

Contacts

Name of contact person
Ministry of Housing and Construction
Office for International Co-operation and Project Coordination
Yousef Al Azmeh Square
Damascus, Syria
Tel: +963-94- 838 967
Fax: +963-11- 231 5286
E-mail: mazissa@scs-net.org

[6] Shared with the generous permission of the Vice Minister of Ministry of Housing and Construction in July 2006 to be used as case study in the FAO-GTZ-LEAD Training Programme on Project Design and Management.

Summary

Syria intends to protect the Euphrates River from pollution by constructing a sewage treatment plant in Deir Ez-zur city. The civil works will be financed by the Ministry of Housing and Construction with USD 5 million. For the supply and installation of mechanical and electrical equipments the Syrian government seeks financing through a foreign donor agency. An estimated sum of US$ 5 million (50%) is requested for this purpose.

Rationale

The main sewer of Deir Ez-zur city is discharging untreated sewage directly into Euphrates River or into side branches of the river. These side branches hardly have a water flow in the dry season, so raw sewage is then being pumped directly for irrigation in the area of the side branches of the Euphrates, thus threatening the environment and the farmers along the Euphrates by health risks.

The Syrian government decided to construct a waste water treatment plant, to treat the sewage discharge of Dier Ez-zur city, up to the limit that it could be reused for irrigation purposes without any bad environmental impacts or health risks.

Goal

The goal of the project is to protect the health of farmers in the area and the population at large by improving the water quality of the Euphrates River which is the main drinking water resource for the whole area and for Iraq as well as shown in photo 10.

Photo 10. The sewer in front leads sewage water directly into a side branch of the Euphrates. The sewage is directly used for irrigation at the other side of the river

Beneficiaries

The main and direct beneficiaries of the project will be the farmers using river water for irrigation (currently waste water) and the people living near the present sewage discharge points along the river and its side branches, where flies and mosquitoes are present in large numbers threatening the public health. The consumers of vegetables in the city will also benefit from the project. In addition, the drinking water resources downstream of Deir Ez-zur will be protected from contamination thus improving the public health at large.

Budget

Total budget: US$ 10 million

Requested amount from GTZ: US$ 5 million

The Syrian government is asking foreign donor agencies to finance the **supply and installation of the technical equipment** for the treatment plant. The tendering documents are already available and not subject for financing. The tender documents and additional information are available on request.

Contributions from the Syrian Government:

The preparation of the design studies and the construction of civil works may be considered as a Syrian contribution to a joint project:

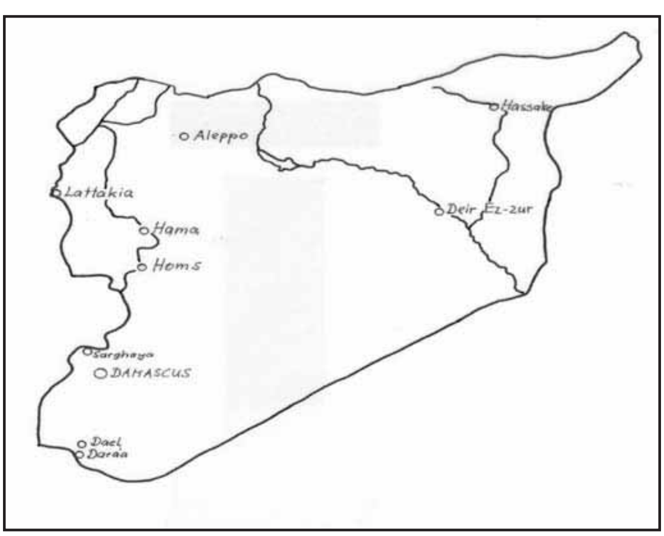
(1) The technical study of the project - including the civil works and the requirements for mechanical and electrical equipments - has been already prepared by the General Company for Engineering and Consultation in Homs financed by Ministry of Housing and Construction.

(2) The Ministry of Housing and Construction will also finance the construction of the civil works.

Background

The city of Deir Ez-zur is located in the eastern part of Syria. The area is an agricultural area with mostly irrigation driven, and few rain fed agriculture is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Deir Ez-zur is located in the west of Syria at the Euphrates River



The main crops are cotton, wheat, and sugar beet. Vegetables and fruits are produced for the local markets. The climate is characterized by long dry and hot summer (May to October) where temperature goes as high as 42 C, and short rainy winter (November to March). The average annual rainfall is 160 mm. The main source of income is agriculture and small industries connected with agriculture like fabric and textile industries and food industries.

A population of around 222 000 inhabitants will be served by the proposed sewage treatment plant. The existing sewer network of 185 km length (including the secondary branches) connects the city of Deir Ez-zur. The sewage water is at the moment discharged to the side branches of Euphrates without any treatment. The water in those branches which contains pathogens is used for irrigation.

The city of Deir Ez-zur has a drinking water supply network. The general establishment for drinking water and sewerage is responsible for water supply at the governorate level. The main drinking water resource is Euphrates River.

The municipality of Deir Ez-zur is responsible for the running of the sewer network at present time; however a separate sewage company will be established in the future to be responsible for the sewage sector at the governorate level including the operation and maintenance of the future sewage treatment plant shown in photo 11.

Photo 11. Rehabilitation and Construction of the sewer net work is ongoing as a prerequisite for the planned sewage treatment plant

Current policy and strategy of Syria for the removal of waste water

Syria sees the pollution of the groundwater and drinking water resources as a major problem for the country. Therefore Syria started constructing treatment plants in the major cities of the country. First priorities are sites, where the source of drinking water supply is affected by sewage pollution. A countrywide investigation is under development, which will set the priorities for the future investment planning.
Due to the lack of experience in constructing sewage treatment plants, Syria sees a large field of co-

operation with foreign countries. This is not only regarding financing of projects, but more than this emphasizing on '**know how transfer**' into the country.

The Ministry of Housing and Construction is responsible for the drinking water supply and the sewage disposal in the national context. Although the Ministry of Housing and Construction is formally responsible for the sewage disposal, the maintenance of the sewer networks is still organized by the municipalities which are under the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment. The Syrian government wants to have the sewage sector in one organization. Therefore, a sewage company was established, where new treatment plants had been built. These new sewage companies took over the responsibilities for the sewer networks and the new treatment plants. It is therefore also envisaged to establish a sewage company in Deir Ez-zur.

In all 14 Syrian governorates the Syrian government has founded establishments for drinking water and sewerage. The Ministry of Housing and Construction is the supervising authority for these establishments. The main duty of these establishments is to secure the drinking water supply for the population.

The Syrian government doesn't see the municipalities capable to run the future sewage treatment plants. Thus the Syrian government intends to establish sewage companies in all 14 governorates. At the moment it is still not decided whether the companies shall be independent or connected to the establishments for drinking water and sewerage in the governorates. This will be the precondition to establish qualified companies to run the sewage treatment plants. The objective is to strengthen the institutions that will be responsible for running the sewer networks and the sewage treatment plants.

Photo 12. Agriculture is the main source of income along river Euphrates

To train the future staff of the treatment plants Syria will establish a training centre in Hama. It is envisaged, that the training centre will be operating by 2006. A Vocational Training Centre in Damascus Sewage Treatment Plant has already started operation recently. Although there are few existing treatment plants in the country some experience were already gained by operating the existing sewage plants. It is planned to organize an experience exchange between the staff of the sewage treatment plants, which will start this year.

Technical Information

To construct Deir Ez-zur sewage treatment plant, a site located few kilometers out of the city was chosen, presented in photo 13. The site is approximately 5 km to the south of the Euphrates River. Two pumping stations will be constructed to pump the raw sewage to the sewage treatment plant. It is planned to use the treated waste water to increase the amount of irrigated land in the area by considering a new irrigation schemes. Ground water recharge shall be investigated as an option for reuse of surplus of treated waste water.

Photo 13. Site for the future treatment plant with areas for irrigation with treated sewage water in the background

A technical and financial study had been conducted by the Ministry to decide, whether stabilization ponds, aerated lagoons or activated sludge technology shall be used for the treatment of sewage water.

It was found out, that the activated sludge process will be the most feasible at Deir Ez-zur. The design parameters were estimated for the first stage as follows in Table 10.

Table 10. Design parameters of the first stage treatment plant at Deir Ez-zur

Number of equivalent inhabitants:	222 000
Daily mean flow:	45 000 m^3/d
Concentration of BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand$_x$) at inlet: at outlet:	 317 mg/l 30 mg/l
Concentration of SS (Suspended Solid) at inlet: at outlet:	 447 mg/l 40 mg/l

It is foreseen to enlarge the treatment plant in a second stage starting from 2015 to a number of equivalent inhabitants of 440 000 equivalents to the inhabitants of the year 2030 with a daily mean flow of 67 000 m³/d.

Major components of the plant are:

- Inlet works
- Screening system
- Grit removal chamber
- Flow meter
- Primary sedimentation tanks
- Aeration tanks
- Secondary settlement tanks
- Chlorination tanks with chlorination equipment hall
- Distribution chambers
- Open digester tanks
- Sludge drying beds
- Necessary pumping stations
- Administration building
- Workshop
- Laboratory

The civil works will be financed by funds of the Syrian government by US $ 5 millions. After finishing the construction work it will be necessary to install the technical equipment. The scope of the works includes the supply, installation, supervision, testing and final takeover of all mechanical and electrical equipment at the treatment plant. International or recognised national standards shall be used for the supply of equipment. The conditions of the works are laid down in the already finished tender book. Further technical information is available through the Office for International Co-operation and Project Coordination of the Ministry of Housing and Construction.

Financial information

The overall investment budget for Deir Ez-zur treatment plant is estimated to be US $ 10 millions. The estimated costs for the mechanical and electrical equipment are calculated to 5 Million US$.

The running costs will be partially financed by user fees, which will be introduced after the finishing of the construction work. The Syrian government already introduced user fees in cities, where a sewage treatment plant was built. By this, the government wants to introduce the 'polluter pays' principle.

☑ Activity 23

This activity starts out as a whole group activity and then you continue working in small groups.

1. Whole group – 'What are the key elements of an effective concept note?' Suggest ideas to create a checklist for analysing concept notes based on a concept note example from Syria

2. Small group – Based on the checklist of an effective concept note, analyse one of the provided two concept notes: one successful, the other unsuccessful

3. You will be asked to report your findings to the whole group and discuss lessons learned for developing your own concept note

Session 14
Drafting a Concept Note

Objectives

By the end of this session you will:
- be able to draft a concept note
- have started to draft a concept note for your own project

Once all of the actors (project proponents, stakeholders and partners) agreed on the project concept, you are in a good position to write a brief (three to four pages) outline of the project concept.

It is useful to have a project concept outline for a number of reasons:

- When you review your outline by considering donors' guidelines, it will become clear whether any additional information is needed in order to develop a full project proposal
- The project concept outline can be used to write an initial letter of inquiry to the donors you decide to approach
- As you continue with your consultation process during project planning, you can refer to the outline to provide people with basic information about your project

The project concept outline should include the following information:

1. A description of the project concept context
2. A summary of the main goal and objectives of the project
3. A description of the scope and scale of the proposed project
4. An outline of the potential outcomes and impact of the project
5. Name and brief description of project proponents
6. Brief description of partners
7. An estimate of the cost of the project
8. Timeframe for the project

Guidelines for each of the above elements of a concept note

1. A description of the project concept context

How did the project originate? What steps were taken to develop the concept (refer briefly to meetings, correspondence, decisions relevant to proposal)?

2. A summary of the main goal and objectives of the project

Outline what needs it addresses, and how the proposed project would address those needs. Explain why this project is the best option for addressing the situation.

3. A description of the scope and scale of the proposed project, in terms of:

a) How many people will be involved as participants?
b) Who are the beneficiaries?
c) The potential impact of the project on local populations
d) The size of the geographical area covered

4. An outline of the potential outcomes and impact of the project

The project **outcomes** describe how the project will change the situation it is designed to address. The project **impact** generally describes effects that will continue beyond the timeframe of the project or beyond the region where the project is situated. When considering project impact, think about answers to these questions:

- What other populations or systems will be affected by this project?
- If the project as proposed was successful, what are the possibilities for expansion?
- Can this project serve as a model for addressing similar situations in other regions?
- Could this initiative be sustained over the long term?

5. The name of the project proponents**,** and description of how they have indicated their support.

6. A brief description of the organization(s) to be involved as partners**,** their areas of expertise, and the reasons for their interest in and support for the project. Include the names of individuals that represent these organizations.

7. An estimate of the costs of the project

Once stakeholders and partner organizations have been identified for the project, you will be able to estimate what resources will be required to implement it. Resources include staffing, equipment, facilities, space, supplies, as well as expenditures for communications, transportation, additional specialist staff, and so on.

Generally, project proponents and partners will provide some of the resources for the project *(these are called in-kind contributions or self-financing parts)*, as an indication of their commitment. Stakeholders may also provide some resources, and the remainder will have to be obtained from other sources, such as a funding agency.

A detailed budget is not required at this stage, but you should determine an estimate of costs that will be required by each partner organization involved in the project. Based on this estimate, it is useful to identify a cost range most appropriate to your project, in local currency, and/or in euros, pounds or dollars. By doing so, you state the expected scale of the project.

The following are some examples of cost ranges:

- less than US $10 000
- between US $10 000 and $25 000
- between US $25 000 and $50 000
- between US $50 000 and $100 000
- between US $100 000 and $200 000
- between US $200 000 and $500 000
- between US $500 000 and $1 000 000

8. Describe the anticipated time frames of the proposed project, in terms of 1) the length of time required to initiate the project and set up administrative systems, 2) the length of time required for project implementation, 3) the time required to assess the project impact (which may extend beyond the project completion), and 4) the expected duration of the donor's involvement.

☑ Activity 24

You will work individually in this activity with the support of the trainers and resource people.

- Draft a concept note for your project based on your project design

Handouts needed:

- Concept Note Template (DFID)

Session 15
Sharing a Concept Note

Objectives

By the end of this session you will:

- enhance your understanding and skills for writing effective concept notes
- develop ideas on how to improve your own concept note

Before identifying and approaching a donor, it is important to verify that everyone involved – the project proponents, partners, and stakeholders – have an accurate shared understanding of the project concept.

This section provides some examples of questions posed by funding agencies when they assess whether a project is 'worthy' of funding, so to speak. These questions are a preliminary guideline only. You will have to determine the criteria used by the donor you plan to approach when doing your assessment.

General principles for all projects

There are a number of general principles that most donors look for to determine the soundness of a particular project. These include:

a) Problem definition
b) Relevance
c) Scientific and technical merit
d) Capacity building
e) Gender considerations
f) Human and institutional resources
g) Complementarities
h) Sustainability
i) General research soundness
j) Development relevance
k) Ethical considerations

l) Assumptions and risks
m) Environment
n) Monitoring and evaluation

a) Problem definition

- Have the project proponents identified the problem clearly?
- Is it something that can realistically be tackled?
- Does the project clearly relate to the problem?

b) Relevance

- Is the project consistent with goals that have been identified by policymakers or others in the project's context?
- Will the execution and success of the project promote sustainable and equitable development that helps to empower vulnerable or disadvantaged groups?

c) Scientific and technical merit

- Is the importance of the problem convincingly demonstrated through sound research?
- Are the project objectives clear and easy to conceptualise in operational terms?
- Is the methodology appropriate and convincing for achieving the project's objectives?

d) Capacity building

- Will the project contribute to the development of local/regional/national/international capacity?
- Will the recipient institution be strengthened as a result of the project?
- Does the project promote collaboration and cooperation?

e) Gender considerations

- Do the design and methodology of the project take into account gender considerations – for example, men's and women's different roles, perspectives, and interests?
- What will the project's impact be on men and women?
- Does the project build capacity of both men and women? Why or why not?

f) Human and institutional resources

- Have the proponents of the project successfully mobilised the necessary collaboration and interest to ensure the most effective use of financial resources and the success of the project?

g) Complementarities

- Do partners share commitment to the project?
- Is the project consistent with funding agency development priorities?
- Is it unique or complementary to other development activities?

h) Sustainability

- Does the project enhance the capacity of the partners to effect change?
- Does it ensure the autonomy of clients, beneficiaries or partners to reproduce results after project completion?
- Does it ensure local funding of recurrent costs if results are to be sustained after project completion?

i) General research soundness

- Relevance of the research
- Clarity of research aims and questions/hypotheses
- Likelihood of influencing policy and practice within a limited time period
- Originality of the proposal
- Soundness of proposed methodology
- Perceived quality of the researcher(s)
- Appropriateness and adequacy of the methods to generate the information sought in the study

j) Development relevance

- Are the research findings likely to be applicable in developing countries or regions other than the one in which the research takes place?

k) Ethical considerations

- Does the project raise any ethical issues affecting those who will be involved in the project, where there could be a negative impact on their health, right to privacy, financial circumstances, or any other matter of significance to them?
- What strategies are suggested to ensure the research will be conducted such that it minimises risks and that people give free, informed consent to their participation?

l) Assumptions and Risks

- What assumptions are being made about attitudes, motivations and opportunities?
- To what extent is the project dependent on external forces? Is it specific about economic factors such as marketing?

m) Environment

- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been conducted?
- What effect will the project have on the environment?
- How significant are the effects?
- Will the project benefit the environment?
- Can any detrimental effects be reduced and if so how?

n) Monitoring and evaluation

- How will the progress of the project towards its goals be monitored?
- How will the project end?

- How will its success be determined and by whom?
- If there are quantifiable targets, what are they, and how were they determined?
- What are the arrangements for the revision of the project during its implementation?
- What plans are there for evaluating the project?
- Will there be a formal evaluation exercise? If so how and when will this take place?
- Will results be shared with others?
- How will results inform future practice?

Writing a concept note requires a great deal of input from you and from others, and in this sense is a microcosm of what is involved in collaborative projects. It also demonstrates that building working relationships takes time and patience.

Each of the partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries has a role to play in the project, and that role should be fairly clearly defined during the project planning process, prior to applying for funding. Partnerships need to be based on common goals that are intrinsically important to each organization and that go beyond simply meeting a requirement for project funding.

Although working cooperatively is challenging, there are long term benefits, as indicated by the following comments on lessons learned from a partnership initiative for a community learning network in Newfoundland:

By bringing stakeholders together and determining how each can contribute without jeopardising its own mandate, it has allowed the various agencies' representatives to foster a ‘re-education’ process within their own organizations. It has helped to amend awkward and out of date regulations and rules. Government funding has been vital, especially in leveraging support from other sources.

From the start, local representatives from the various public agencies were committed to the initiative, helping ease bureaucratic rules; they also shared the ‘good news story’ within their departments, which responded more readily to suggestions from the community as a result. The initiative's greatest success to date has been its ability to coordinate efforts among the various agencies operating in the area, and to achieve a cost-effectiveness which would not have been possible if the same organizations had been operating independently.[7]

☑ Activity 25

This is a whole group activity. You will be presented your fellow participants’ concept notes.

Offer your ideas on the following:

- What do you think is good in this concept note?
- What can be improved?

[7] Wong, A. Institutional Collaboration: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally, in Brooke, M. and M. Waldron, eds., University Continuing Education in Canada, Thompson, Toronto, 1994