

July 2009 Newsletter:

The Architecture of Project Design and Presentation

This is a condensed version of a [more detailed article](#).

In [June's newsletter](#), we looked at the human dimension of project design; we talked about participatory needs assessments, consensus building, and donor input. This month we will look at management tools that will increase the likelihood that your project will *have* human-scale impact.

Beginning Logframes

The Logical Framework (logframe) is a powerful tool that aids in project planning, budgeting, project management, and monitoring and evaluation. In working with donors and stakeholders, your logframe will allow you to communicate to others exactly what you are trying to accomplish.

In last month's newsletter we used a participatory needs assessment to define the problem, and then researched activities that would provide solutions in order to come up with a project concept. Your project concept can be laid out in a simplified logframe matrix that allows you to organize:

- the project goal
- outcomes that fulfill the goal
- outputs that fulfill the outcomes
- activities that fulfill the outputs
- inputs necessary for the activities

Here is a simple project that makes a good example: providing ESL and job training for refugees.



| ESL Project Concept | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Problem Statement | | Refugee families have trouble becoming independent due to a lack of language & vocational skills. | | | |
| Goal | All refugee families and individuals in Anytown, USA are self-sufficient. | | | | |
| Objective | 300 adult refugees in Anytown, USA receive sufficient English and vocational training courses over a 24 month period to allow 75% of them to qualify for jobs. | Outcome | Refugee families increase their household income and job related benefits. | | |
| Outputs | Refugees received 24 months of English language courses and cultural immersion | Refugees received 18 months of vocational training courses and 6 months of OJT | | | |
| Activities | Classes | Mentoring | Vocational training | OJT Traineeships | Cultural immersion |
| Inputs | Staff and volunteers | State Funds, grant funds | Community college facilities | Partnering businesses | |

In a logframe other questions arise: were short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes achieved and verified? Placing our project information into a true logframe matrix, we will arrange the components in a vertical axis, in chronological order, alongside indicators and means of verification.

| ESL Logical Framework | | | | For the full logframe example follow this link |
|-------------------------|--|------------------|---|---|
| Hierarchy of Objectives | | | Objectively Verifiable Indicators | Means of Verification |
| Goal | All refugee families and individuals in Anytown, USA are self-sufficient. | | Percentage of refugee families that are self-sufficient in Anytown | Comparison between baseline and final evaluation Interviews with participants |
| Objective 1 | 300 adult refugees in Anytown, USA receive sufficient English and vocational training courses over a 24 month period to allow 75% of them to qualify for and secure jobs | Outcome 1 | Percentage of refugee participants whose increased language and vocational skills empowered them to secure jobs and become self-sufficient within 36 months of the start of language & vocational classes | Comparison between baseline and final evaluation survey Interviews with participants Family budgets Pay stubs Welfare records |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | and discontinue welfare benefits. | | | |
| Output 1.1 | Refugees received 24 months of English language courses and cultural immersion | | Percentage of refugees who completed 24 months of courses with passing grade | Attendance records Report Cards |
| | Activity 1.1.1 | Develop Curriculum and class schedule | Curriculum and schedule prepared | Printed curriculum and 24 month class schedule |
| | Activity 1.1.2 | Research and purchase course materials | Units purchased | Invoices |

With this framework you can easily work backwards to see if the activities do everything necessary to fulfill the outputs, and if the outputs will do everything necessary to fulfill the Objective.

The indicators and means of verification are the beginnings of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. This plan will allow you to be able to see if the project is meeting goals during the course of the project as well as at the end of the project. Be sure your indicators are specific and measurable.

Project Budget

Since your activities in the logframe are in a chronological order, they can be cut and pasted into Excel. By filling in quantities and unit costs, you can derive the total cost of an activity. I break activities down into fine detail; it is easier to estimate the cost of a single, simple part of an activity than a complex component.

The finished budget will allow a future project manager to see the steps necessary to fulfill each activity, and will provide greater cost control.

| ESL Budget | | This partial, simplified budget is an 'example only' to show concordance with the logframe | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|----------|-----------|-------|--|
| Activity | Detail | Unit | Quantity | Unit Cost | Total | |
| Output 1.1 | Refugees received 24 months of English language courses and cultural immersion | | | | | |
| Activity 1.1.1 | Develop Curriculum | | | | | |
| | Director partners w/ community college for space | Month | 0.5 | 3000 | 1500 | |
| | Director develops curriculum and class schedule | Month | 1.5 | 3000 | 4500 | |
| | Assistant | Month | 2 | 2250 | 4500 | |
| Activity 1.1.2 | Research and purchase course materials | | | | | |
| | Director researches and authorizes purchase | Month | 0.5 | 3000 | 1500 | |
| | Course Materials | Unit | 300 | 200 | 60000 | |
| | Assistant | Month | 0.5 | 3000 | 1500 | |

Project Scheduling

Similar to the budget, the activities can be pasted into an Excel spreadsheet designed as a calendar bar chart. This is a quick way for all stakeholders to quickly grasp the scope of the project.

| ESL Project Schedule: Output 1.1 | | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|
| Activity | Detail | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 |
| Output 1.1 | Refugees received 24 months of English language courses | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 1.1.1 | Develop Curriculum | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 1.1.2 | Purchase course materials | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 1.1.3 | Hire 4 ESL teachers | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 1.1.4 | Enroll refugees in classes | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 1.1.5 | Teach classes for 24 months | | | | | | | | |

Logframe Summary

The first logframe is the hardest. Consider hiring a consultant to develop your first one – it can simply be revised for each new project, giving your organization a family of project documents that are absolutely parallel to each other. If a year passes before receiving grant funds, the project documents will make it easier for a new project manager to fully understand the project than if they only received a narrative-based grant proposal.

Consensus Building

Using this logframe information, the fundraising staff can prepare a draft proposal using the donor's forms or guidelines. Keep the narrative parts of the proposal short, concise and to the point. Return to the donor with the logframe, budget, schedule and draft proposal and ask for their comments.

Donors are trying to accomplish their missions and goals, and they will support a good proposal with sound suggestions. Encouraging donor input forges partnerships and ownership. Donor input can also mean the difference between a mediocre proposal – and a finely crafted one that fits donor mission like a glove. A well detailed proposal will give the donor the confidence that your project will be well managed.

Final proposal and submittal

You have filled in the donor's forms and have incorporated their latest suggestions. Two important things need to be done before submittal:

1. Ask a trusted development colleague to review the proposal for clarity, content and concordance.
2. Ask someone akin to your college freshman English (or local language) professor to review the proposal for grammar and spelling.

Make the suggested corrections, and deliver the proposal. Good luck on your project!

In Review: Here are the highlights of good project design:

- Using participatory needs assessments
- Researching the project theme for empirical evidence
- Building community consensus
- Writing a project fact sheet
- Requesting donor input
- Developing a logistic framework, budget and project schedule
- Writing a draft proposal
- Requesting donor input
- Revising the draft into a final proposal
- Submittal

Next Month: August 2009 Newsletter

How to launch a community development project.

Congratulations! You received the grant funding. Here is what you need to do get the project under way.

Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Sincerely

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