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October 4, 2012

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

(Call for Applications) ABILIS Foundation Grants for Empowerment of People with Disabilities

(Call for Applications) Gates Foundation Grant Opportunities - New Grand Challenges Explorations Topics

(Free Resource) Alliance Magazine Free Subscription Offer

(Resource) How to Manage Joint Advocacy Projects

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(Call for Applications) ABILIS Foundation Grants for Empowerment of People with Disabilities

The ABILIS Foundation provides grants ranging from €500 to €10,000 for projects initiated by organizations that are run by persons who have a disability. Organizations that are run by parents of children with disabilities can also apply.

The ABILIS Foundation in Finland supports activities that contribute toward equal opportunities for people with disabilities in society through human rights, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Special priority is given to projects advocating for human rights of people with disabilities and to activities developed and implemented by women with disabilities.

In order to be eligible for support, organizations must have a certificate of registration and be based in a country defined as qualifying for Official Development Assistance.

Applicants based in India, Bangladesh, Uganda, Kazakhstan, Tanzania, and Ethiopia should contact ABILIS partner organizations for an application form.

Applicants located in other eligible countries must contact the Foundation to request the application form.

For more go

to: [http://www.abilis.fi/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=20&Itemid=4&lang=en](http://www.abilis.fi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20&Itemid=4&lang=en)

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### (Call for Applications) Gates Foundation Grant Opportunities - New Grand Challenges Explorations Topics

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is now accepting grant proposals for Round 10 of Grand Challenges Explorations, an initiative to encourage innovative and unconventional global health and development solutions. Applicants can be at any experience level; in any discipline; and from any organization, including colleges and universities, government laboratories, research institutions, non-profit organizations and for-profit companies.

Two-page grant proposals are being accepted online until November 7, 2012 on the following topics:

- v Labor Saving Innovations for Women Smallholder Farmers
- v New Approaches in Model Systems, Diagnostics, and Drugs for Specific Neglected Tropical Diseases
- v New Approaches for the Interrogation of Anti-malarial Compounds
- v Aid is Working. Tell the World

Initial grants will be US \$100,000 each, and projects showing promise will have the opportunity to receive additional funding of up to US \$1 million.

Deadline for Submission: November 7, 2012

For more go

to: <http://www.grandchallenges.org/Explorations/Pages/ApplicationInstructions.aspx>

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### Alliance Magazine Free Subscription Offer

Do you work for a foundation, NGO or other organisation involved with philanthropy and social investment?

Alliance aims to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among philanthropists, social investors and others working for social change worldwide in order to maximize the impact of funding for social development. To help achieve this, Alliance offers FREE electronic subscriptions to those involved with this field who are based in countries not designated as high-income countries by the World Bank.

For more go here: <http://www.alliancemagazine.org/en/content/free-electronic-subscriptions-0>

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(Resource) How to Manage Joint Advocacy Projects

## **Develop and Manage a Joint Advocacy Project**

Working together in a common project is a process of coming to terms with a joint purpose, different partners' ways of doing things and the unique strengths and potential contribution of each partner. Ideally the process leads to synergy, where the impact of the collaboration is greater than what the individual partners may have achieved.

### **1. Advocacy Needs are Raised by the Community**

True participatory development takes place from the ground up. Ideally, advocacy requests should come from the people affected by that issue. The strength of an advocacy project will be even greater if the requests to address a particular issue come from several different communities. This gives a project impetus and meaning – it is not just about ticking off things that have to be done because they were in a proposal or an idea from someone's head.

Participatory planning and involvement of the community raising this request will give the project more weight. This "community" may be a group of affected people from one area, a number of people from different areas affected by a common issue, or members of an existing network.

### **2. Verification of the Needs and Baseline Study**

Many advocacy initiatives begin with the genuine interest and passion of one or two individuals recognising a need. However, for advocacy work to be sustained, a larger impetus is often needed. Therefore after the initial need is identified, it is worth spending some time verifying the extent of the need and even conducting a thorough **baseline assessment**. This will form a solid foundation for the initiative and may be used later to assess the progress of the work. The verification may also ascertain how many community partners are willing to invest time and energy in supporting the campaign. Without this investment the advocacy work may become hollow and paper-based, rather than having the backing of a stronger groundswell of many people or organisations. One way to determine the genuine interest is to put out a call for partners interested in tackling this issue together.

### **3. Finding Relevant Partners**

Finding the relevant partners for a joint advocacy project already involves choosing the approach, to some extent. Agree to focus on a common issue and define the parameters of the project from the beginning. Ideally, partnership would involve different partners

with areas of expertise, each contributing from an angle to create a higher level impact that could not be achieved by each organisation working separately. Once the focus has been clarified, the next step is to create an impetus for people to come together. This may be funding, but ideally it is around people who wish to improve practice through collaboration.

#### **4. Project Planning**

Investing adequate time in project planning may be the most important stage of the partnership's collaboration. It is crucial that the partnership develops concrete and measurable outcomes and that it is clear and well documented who will be responsible for which outcomes and which activity. It is recommended that the planning stage starts with a brainstorm about the possible outcomes. Then one may gradually start to define the project plan. At the end of the planning process the project plan, budget and roles should be clearly aligned.

#### **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

Defining the roles and responsibilities within the partnership should help to develop a clear understanding and detailed document of exactly who will be doing what and when. This should be clearly aligned with the project activities and outcomes.

Each partner may be asked to submit an operational plan with clear time frames, which can then be collated and compared. It is also recommended that the partnership builds in costing for the management time of each partner. Then one need not feel bad to call people in for such planning and progress meetings.

#### **Partnership Structure**

You may wish to define a clear project structure of how you are going to work together in the partnership. This may be documented in the form of a simple memorandum of understanding that is agreed upon and signed by all project partners. Here are some questions to consider when developing your joint agreement on how to work together:

Reporting and management structure

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What are the lines of accountability in the project structure? In other words, who will report to whom about the project progress?

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Who will be the lead partner and what is the role of the lead partner? Will the lead partner rotate on a yearly basis?

### Responsibility for deliverables

- Is each partner responsible for delivering the outcomes assigned to them in the project plan? Or will there be some collaboration to meet the outcomes together?

### Dispute

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- What will be the process followed if there is a disagreement between the partners or if someone is not delivering according to their plan?

### Schedule of meetings

- How often will you meet?
- Who is expected to attend these meetings?
- What notice period will be given for joint meetings?

### Communication

- What form of communication will you use (eg email, fax, post, telephone calls)?

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- What is the procedure about keeping others informed of communications (eg will you copy one another all correspondence or only on issues affecting joint decisions?)

### Monitoring and Evaluation System

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- What form of monitoring and evaluation do partners undertake themselves?
- What external monitoring and evaluation will take place?

### **Lead Partner**

It may be helpful to have a lead partner who is preferably independent and whose main role is to oversee the progress of the project. Ideally this should not be an organisation who is also involved in service delivery.

The role of such a lead partner may be:

- To hire and manage the project manager
- To support the M&E process and do some higher level impact assessment of the whole project
- To deal with alignment issues – make sure that the project proposal is coherent and implementation takes place
- To keep the perspective of the overall project cycle and deal with reporting to donors and overall financial management.

### **Joint Management Team**

Here is a suggestion of the main focus of a JMT:

- Use the operational plan to reflect on the progress of each activity and outcome
- Reflect on the expenditure according to the budget and any decisions around surplus or deficit expenditure
- Discuss general common administrative issues (eg pending donor visits, reporting deadlines etc)

The JMT may decide to meet monthly initially and then once every two or three months. The JMT should be careful not to be hooked into micro-management of the project implementation, but rather to maintain a focus on key decisions affecting the project. This may include policy and systems development and keeping an eye on the overall project progress and outcomes. If there is a need for more technical project collaboration meetings, it may be advisable to have a separate project implementers forum or operational planning meetings which meet more regularly to discuss the details of joint work on the ground.

### **Project Manager**

In the light of the scale of the project, CAP employed a full time Project Manager to oversee the implementation of the project. Points to consider in appointing a Project Manager include:

- Agreeing on what type of coordination you want for the project
- Agreeing where the person should be based
- Agreeing on the level of responsibility and job description
- Agreeing on the level of authority with respect to the Joint Management Team and project partners.

A good Project Manager can act as the “glue” that keeps the project together. Depending on the degree of responsibility desired, here is a brief outline of some of the possible functions of a Project Manager:

- Manage and maintain oversight over implementation of the approved project with respect to outputs, numerical indicators, and activity schedule
- Coordinate the different activities and interventions
- Financial Management, including oversight of the approved budget, expenditure and financial reporting
- Provide motivation, leadership, and support to the project staff
- Network and liaise with other organisations and government departments
- Represent the public face of the project
- Liaison and linking with donor partners, including submitting consolidated reports, information sharing, coordinating project visits, clarifying concepts and checking that the requirements have been met.

## **6. Principles and Ethics of the Project Work**

It is helpful to be explicit about the principles and ethics underpinning joint work, because again one may make certain assumptions about development work which do not have a shared understanding. In doing this, it may help to talk through a few actual case examples of the likely type of work to be encountered. Here is an example of a simple framework below:

### **Agreed Ethics Around Interactions with Community Partners Respect and Dignity**

In all interactions with community partners and project stakeholders, an attitude of respect will be communicated. This will be upheld even when we are feeling frustrated and stressed.

### **Responding to Requests**

We will try to respond to requests within 3 days of receiving them, even if to simply communicate that we have received the request and are taking it seriously.

## **7. Creating Standardised Systems**

From early on in the partnership, it is helpful to agree on common ways of progress reporting, financial reporting and systems of data capture, monitoring and evaluation.

### **Progress Reporting**

It may be helpful to develop a common template for narrative or progress reports.

This should link very clearly with the activity

plans and impact or outcomes intended for each period.

Specific project funders may have their own formats, but

usually they will follow a similar structure. Try to include a section on successes and challenges to encourage deeper reflection and honest sharing about the project.

It may be helpful to develop a common database or method of recording the work that is undertaken. If this is done,

take care to link the recording format to the outcomes of the project (ie start from the outcomes and work backwards to the

### **Financial Reporting**

Once again a simple common reporting format may be developed to compare the budget with the expenditure, showing significant variance. It may help to agree on similar line items and cost coding from the outset, rather than running each partner's budget in parallel.

Try to agree on

what percentage of variance will be allowed on budget specific line items before needing to raise the matter at a Joint Management Team (JMT) meeting. A varia

nce of between 10 and 20% is recommended, depending on donor requirements. Try to encourage open reflections and joint decisions about the savings and deficits, while being sensitive to each partner's specific budget. Try to develop a sense of a shared project and therefore a shared budget and an interest in meeting the goals together.

Once again the importance of aligning the budget to the activities and outcomes is emphasised. It may even be helpful to submit budgets for the specific operational plans of each quarter. However, space should be given to revise these operational plans annually.

It may be helpful for members of the JMT and the project manager to go on a basic financial management course.

### **Review Processes**

It is helpful to build in critical reflection and review processes from the start of the partnership. This should look at both outcomes and process. This means always keeping an eye on two levels – about the work itself and about the relationships in the partnerships and the way that things are done together.

It may also include review of the joint project systems.

Rather than an interrogation on what has and hasn't been achieved, try to make the review

processes creative time for project staff to come together and talk about the work –

this can create positive synergies and space for honest reflection and sharing. Listen for underlying common themes emerging from the work and what can be learnt from these. Such joint learning can have a significant impact on the partners own organisations as well as on the sector.

## **8. Communication**

Working in partnership means developing relationships between people. For this reason good communication is often a cornerstone of effective partnerships. Here are some tips around improving communication in the partnership:

- Keep written records of all decisions. When disagreements arise, try to reduce time spent arguing by going back to the source document around the decision.
- Encourage people to call one another on things that they said they would do, but try to do this in an unemotional and matter of fact way.
- Spend time trying to understand what each other is doing



- Be organised and make sure that a lots get done at meetings in a structured way to reduce frustration
- Make space for positive feedback to show appreciation of what the partners are doing
- Create time for team-building
- Distinguish when the issues are personal and when they are about the work. In a partnership there will always be some people who do not get on so well with one another or who have different personality styles.
- Be clear about with whom one is communicating about what – for example, don't talk to junior staff of partner organisations about management issues.

Try to develop a common language - a shared understanding of what it is you are trying to achieve and the process you are using. A common language is very useful to make sure that everyone is on the same page and that everyone has the same vision. Practically, it may be helpful to have a shared understanding of the terminology that is being used.

## **9. Dealing with Conflict**

If you are in a relationship with someone, there will always be points of conflict. If we accept this, we can develop a system in place for when it happens.

When there is a disagreement or breach, follow the procedures agreed in the memorandum of understanding, rather than debating each step. This helps to depersonalise the situation if one simply follows the steps laid out beforehand. Otherwise one may spend much time discussing on how to deal sensitively with each situation and in the end this may make the process more personal and uncomfortable. Rather agree beforehand on systems and simply implement these systems.

In general, try to listen for underlying issues that might be creating conflict (for example if one partner feels that they are doing a lot of work for a small portion of the budget). Unless one deals with these underlying issues the frustration may be expressed through many different layers. Other times it is helpful simply to agree to disagree about specific issues.

## **10. Team-Building**

There is inevitably a lot of tension and anxiety in working together on a joint project. Therefore it is helpful to create spaces for people

ple to vent these feelings. This may encourage externalising issues, rather than finding any forum to address that deeper issue. It is also important to spend time building relationships within the partnership. Try to build in such spaces for team-building and budget for this from the start.

Here are some tips about building the team work in a partnership:

- Try to understand people's personality types, their personal interests and talents.
- Strategise with different people on different things to maximise the strengths of the team.
- Try not to talk about specific people to others in the team.
- Constantly see and show people their worth.
- Take people out to lunch or have informal meetings to vent and connect.
- Include catering in meetings to show a caring approach
- Take people out of the office and have workshops in a nice environment
- Team-building is also about spending unstructured time with the partners
- Structure in times of feedback to one another. For example, use the exercise "What I think you should carry on, stop, or start ..."

## **Conclusion**

There is an increasing need for organisations involved in the development sector to start collaborating more effectively with one another to work towards higher level impact that may reach many people and even prevent further suffering. This is particularly important in advocacy work. However, because working in partnership inevitably involves relationships between people and organisations who may be very different, such a process can be complicated and frustrating. The Child Advocacy Project believes that many of these frustrations may be circumvented with proper structural consideration and planning. Although there are challenges with a multi-partner approach, ultimately this type of collaboration can provide a more holistic and comprehensive approach to interventions. Joint projects may add legitimacy when advocating for better outcomes for target groups and help build the capacity and expertise for the NGOs involved through sharing experiences and joint learning. They may create valuable spaces for shared reflection and learning. It is our wish that this booklet may inspire others to form partnerships to better address the needs of vulnerable children and to experience the compound value of partnership projects.

For more go to: <http://www.childhope.org.uk/wcore/showdoc.asp?id=1107>

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our

active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>. We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org).

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