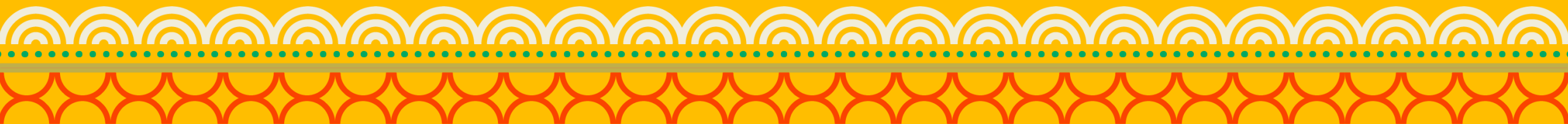




# HOW TO DEVELOP A STRONG PROJECT DESIGN

User Guide #9

September 2023



This User Guide is intended to help applicants develop a strong project design as applicants prepare AmplifyChange grant applications.

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# **BASED ON ANALYSIS OF PROPOSALS AND PROJECTS**

We have reviewed a sample of successful and unsuccessful project proposals, and ongoing projects across different funds to identify areas we can help applicants to better design their projects.

We propose 11 considerations here to help you work through your project design process.



# WHY IS PROJECT DESIGN SO IMPORTANT?

A strong project design means that your project:

- is more likely to be accepted for funding
- is more likely to have a bigger impact on the people you wish to serve



# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STRONG PROJECT DESIGN

**PART 1:** Nuts and bolts

**PART 2:** Monitoring project change

**PART 3:** Guiding principles





We recommend you go through these 11 considerations with your full team (including finance, and the intended project beneficiaries) before starting your application.





# **PART 1: NUTS AND BOLTS**

# CONTEXT

Consider...

1. What is the main need your project seeks to address? E.g. safe abortion services are not available and women are dying as a result of unsafe abortion
2. Why are these services not available? What are the barriers to delivering safe abortion that your project will need to address?
3. What other organisations are working in the same / similar area that you could learn from, coordinate or partner with?

Your in-depth understanding of the context will be crucial as it provides the foundation on which you can build appropriate approaches.





# STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Consider...

1. Who will benefit from your project? These people are your beneficiaries. How can you engage them in your project design to find out what their most pressing needs are?
2. Who will support your project?
  - consult local government to find out their ideas on how your project could support their existing efforts in this area?
  - implementing partners? Make sure you engage them from the start of the design phase so you can learn from each other's experiences in this area and select the most effective approaches.
  - Could you engage in informal partnerships or form a mentoring relationship with older/larger / more experienced organisations that you can learn from?

Engaging all relevant stakeholders from the outset is crucial. It will set a solid Foundation for effective partnership, promote rapport and team spirit, reducing the likelihood of silo-working and communication issues during project implementation.



# CAPACITY BUILDING

Consider...

1. Your own organisation and implementing partners' capacity building needs first
2. The most effective methods of delivering capacity building
3. Allowing enough time to design and deliver high quality training, working with 'agents of change'
4. How your project will support capacity development of government, where possible, to promote sustainability and government ownership of your project's aims
5. How to measure qualitative as well as quantitative change



# BUDGETING

Consider...

1. Making sure your finance team are involved in the design process
2. Finding pre-financing for the design stage to help you research and spend time with stakeholders and beneficiaries to develop the most relevant design
3. What is realistically possible to achieve during the first 6 months of your project. Take the time needed for internal capacity building into account.
4. Your organisation's capacity to deliver the project. You may need to recruit additional staff.





# **PART 2: MONITORING PROJECT PROGRESS TOWARDS CHANGE**

# THEORY OF CHANGE

Consider...

1. Why – what problem or need do you seek to address?
2. How - what strategies will you use?
3. Who - which population groups do you intend to benefit most?
4. What - what change does your project seek to make?
5. When – over what time period do you anticipate achieving what level of progress?

Please refer to the User Guide **‘Explaining our theory of change’** to help you develop your project’s theory of change and milestones.



# MEASURING CHANGE

Consider...

1. Developing a baseline position
2. Defining targeted change and how to measure this for different population groups
3. How you will measure the different types of change among primary beneficiaries?
4. How you will measure change among secondary beneficiaries?
5. How your project will reach the most vulnerable, and those with the greatest need?
6. What evidence you will use to document all changes you expect to see?
7. What resources you will need to measure change?

Always look first at what valid monitoring systems and data sources are in place that could be used or built on to measure change in your project.



# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Consider...

1. What data you will need to collect
2. How you will collect it
3. What purpose will that data serve? i.e. what will you do with it once you've gathered it?
4. How will you triangulate and verify your project data?
5. How will you and your partners establish a reporting system? It will need to be practical and feasible, informed by your capacity to collect data, analyse and use it
6. Will you carry out any evaluation activity? What would you like to evaluate within your project and why?
7. How will you use monitoring and evaluation outputs for learning purposes?





# **PART 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES**



# GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Consider...

1. How you will identify areas of potential resistance to gender-related change from within the community that are relevant to your project
2. Realistic levels of time and effort to overcome such resistance so that you plan around this
3. How best to reach people living with multiple exclusion factors
4. Articulating how girls and women will play an active role in decision-making or management within your project scope, or as a result of your intervention
5. Clarifying the needs, perceptions and roles of men and boys in your project context



# FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Consider...

1. Testing assumptions and theory of change regularly
2. Developing a risk management plan to help mitigate against changes in context that could negatively impact on your project's ability to deliver its intended outcomes
3. Developing and embedding a regular beneficiary feedback mechanism



# SUSTAINABILITY

Consider...

1. Building sustainability into project interventions wherever possible. Strengthen relationships with government
2. Working with beneficiary communities to have them engage in determining what approaches to sustainability are possible
3. Strengthening/ including advocacy within your project interventions/ strategies
4. Carefully the ability of stakeholders to absorb recurring costs. Be realistic.
5. Assessing your project assumptions regularly and updating / adjusting your sustainability strategy accordingly

The most sustainable projects are those whose beneficiaries are self-sufficient at the end of the project.



# VALUE FOR MONEY

Consider...

1. Team approach - have included your whole team (finance, M&E etc) in designing your project and budget to ensure it is realistic?
2. Context - different types of interventions and contexts result in different value for money measurements





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