

MANUAL FOR ENGAGING

PROFESSIONALS AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

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TOGETHER

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Who is it aimed at?

This guide is aimed at young people with low vision from around the world, who can learn in a didactic way about the importance of associationism and how to become part of an association.

This material is one more product of the official materials of the project, and for proper teaching, the order of use should be as follows:

ORDER Of use

Webinar
Multidisciplinary webinar for young people with low vision.

Methodological guide
Guide for promoting associationism and how to form an organization.

Manual for engaging
Manual for gathering support from professionals and organizations.

Pilot Test
After reviewing the previous sections, conduct test trials of the same.



Together For Inclusion

For more information https://sighttogether.eu/

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INTRODUCTION

Before embarking on any path, you must ask the question: "Does this path have a heart?"

Carlos Castaneda

Las Enseñanzas de Don Juan

Establishing an association is a challenge. It becomes even more so when it comes to channeling resources for the projects they generate. Although the reasons for starting one may differ, it is common to all the commitments to influence urgent social and economic problems.

An association is not just an organization seeking donations. Generally, it aims to be a permanent institution focused on social welfare, with the capacity to produce, raise, and manage funds. To do this, the founders of an association need to have a clear idea of how they will obtain resources. The key challenges are to discover how to interest individuals, public and private institutions in their proposals, and how to create an environment that allows the organization to support, in the most efficient way possible, the people it aims to serve.

People and institutions that do not have money, but have interest, can create associations without having to carry out extensive consultation. They only need to comply with the minimum legal requirements present in the country where they want to create it. We saw this in detail in the Methodological Guide for the construction of active participation and associationism of young people with low vision.



We are a group of international associations working as partners in this **ERASMUS+** project: Together for Inclusion: Young People with Low Vision for Active Participation, Awareness, and Associationism in the World, to give visibility to young people with low vision who want to be agents of change, either by supporting us through our associations or by creating their own. That's why we have decided to cover the key elements and tools so that they can know the way, follow the signs we have traveled, and focus on learning, carrying out the actions that need to be generated to sustain the projects they want and need to promote, and to promote the participation of a range of potential members and establish collaborations that benefit from achieving their objectives.

Establishing an association in our case required formulating the idea, promoting awareness and commitment to this idea among the main national and/or international stakeholders, raising resources to sustain the initiative, and creating a basic institutional structure. The process involved consulting individuals and groups related to the initiative (wealthy individuals, key local and international organizations, political leaders, scientists, medical professionals, academics, lawyers, and many others).

The process of constitution can take various paths and depends on the political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of each nation. This process is also influenced by the individuals and/or organizations that support the idea.

In summary, all these years have been exhilarating, challenging, frustrating, exhausting, draining, boring, enlightening, comforting, and after all is said and done, encompass a wealth of experiences, especially for the associations we represent. Our condition, often referred to as a "rare disease" due to the limited number of cases and the biased way it is labeled, tends to make us assume that we are not achieving the impact we need because we require greater awareness and support for the objectives that our associations, both individually and collectively, aim to achieve through this project.







For young people with low vision who wish to start an association and make it sustainable, we want to pave the way for them because we know it's not easy to be sustainable. We believe in their patience, intelligence, and passion, and thus aim to organize and address the important issues when it comes to seeking help. However, we understand that we may not be able to provide answers to all frustrations and questions that may arise in this process. We encourage them to persevere in achieving their goals and not to give up when obstacles arise along the way. We were there, at the gateway to this associative world, and we know what it's like and have tasted what we have achieved. We want to tell them that there is something higher, a special vision, an ultimate purpose that would justify the attainment of the goals they have set. This is what keeps us passionate and joyful, knowing that the journey continues.

Here are some of the main reasons that have driven us to create this manual:

- Desire to increase the potential impact of active participation through associationism.
- Desire to learn from other people and benefit from their experiences and good ideas.
- Desire to raise awareness and obtain support for the objectives of the association they have created or with which they collaborate, or would like to collaborate, in their country.
- Lack of sufficient resources to address the most important needs of the members and to achieve the objectives they have set.

Therefore, the purpose is to provide young people with low vision, individuals, and organizations with a comprehensive manual for fundraising, as well as a system to help them gather support from professionals and institutions, covering key areas such as communication, the best way to identify public and private institutions, as well as companies, professionals, entrepreneurs, and politicians who may empathize with this idea from their community. The manual aims to equip users with effective strategies and practical resources not only to present their projects for others to consider supporting but also to strengthen their projects and causes through alliances and collaborations.



The importance of this manual lies in its ability to empower individuals and associations in seeking external support because we recognize that collaboration with professionals and institutions can be crucial for the success of projects, social causes, and initiatives of an association. However, we cannot overlook the support that arises from the association itself, the internal support, which is for us the most important.

This manual provides knowledge and tools to establish strong relationships, communicate effectively, and mobilize resources, which can make the difference between failure and achieving objectives. Additionally, by promoting collaboration among different sectors of society, the manual contributes to the personal growth and development of young people with low vision, as well as to raising awareness of how their actions can create stronger and more cohesive communities and societies.

CHAPTER 1
PREPARATION

“Luck is where preparation meets opportunity.”

Seneca

The preparation stage is crucial in all processes, not only in those related to seeking assistance, as it sets the foundation for efforts to be effective, focused, and well-directed. In this context, preparation involves a series of critical activities that will help define objectives, identify appropriate institutions or professionals, and ensure that they are addressing the association's needs effectively. Here, we delve into why the preparation stage is essential in more detail and depth:

Definition of Objectives

Preparation allows them to precisely define their objectives and goals. By understanding what they truly need and what they aim to achieve, they can communicate their needs clearly and persuasively to the institutions or professionals they approach.

This manual aims to clarify what it means to seek professional or institutional assistance to make an association sustainable. For this reason, we want to emphasize that asking and receiving is serving. This may sound strange, but it is a reality. When you present the objectives that your association has set and seek the best way to find the help you need to achieve them, you are asking, and asking is not begging or pleading. Asking implies a relationship with another (person and/or institution) who receives and listens to you. In other words, the word "serving" implies the presence of another, where one gives and the other receives, and both take turns in giving and receiving because both are part of the same equation and need each other for something that serves and is useful for both parties. Our expectation is that you understand that seeking help, asking for help does not put you in a position of inferiority, but rather establishes a relationship of equals, without hierarchies or power dynamics, where everyone benefits.



Asking is not an improper or reckless act, and it should never be something shameful. If interests are shared and parties agree on a solution that benefits them, asking makes sense. For this, it is really important to have clarity on the objectives pursued by the association. This avoids vagueness and ensures that the request for help or collaboration is focused and relevant to all. But it's not only important to have clear objectives of your own. It's also very important to know what the other party is seeking, what they are looking to support, what objectives they have. If you know this, it's easier to identify the opportunities they may have where they are looking and to prepare a proposal that responds and contributes to the achievement of what they have identified as an opportunity.

This document aims to be useful, particularly to those who perform these tasks in associations: management staff, board members, and founders. Because it's so specific, generally these individuals are responsible for developing the strategy and actions to seek help within the organization. Responsible individuals must be appointed to follow up, because otherwise, all efforts will be in vain.

We draw on the experience of the associations involved in this project, which have successfully and continue to successfully seek help to shape and bring their projects to life. However, we hope that the information and experiences will also be useful to other types of donor institutions, including private company foundations, family funds, and government development funds, to feel persuaded to collaborate with you. Although each association has its own peculiarities, the experience presented here reveals that there are parallels in the institutional development process. Among these parallels is the fact that all associations have to deal with specific tasks throughout their development process:

- Gather an active membership
- Raise and develop a sustainable source of income
- Develop a trained professional team
- Implement accounting systems
- Strategically plan for growth
- Recruit and develop your board of directors



Understanding the needs and objectives of a youth association with low vision and communicating them clearly and convincingly to institutions or professionals who may be interested in helping them is essential to ensure that their requests are focused and relevant.

This manual assumes that the reader has an association or foundation, meaning they understand that, in order to seek assistance, whether financial or otherwise, they must have one legally constituted.

This manual can and should also be used as a complement to the Methodological Guide for the construction of active participation and associationism of young people with low vision. There, many descriptions can be found that may be useful for creating a strategic plan, establishing objectives, and generating actions.

Preparation allows for the definition of SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). These objectives are more effective for communicating their needs and ensuring they can be measured and evaluated properly. How to define SMART objectives is extensively explained in the guide I refer to.

Identifying Needs

The preparation stage allows them to conduct an in-depth self-assessment. They can analyze specific challenges related to low vision, identify areas where they need support, and determine the limitations they wish to overcome through the association. This provides a solid foundation for their requests for assistance. It enables them to make an introduction to raise awareness of what they are seeking.



It is important to note that not all needs are equal in terms of urgency or importance. Preparation allows them to prioritize their requirements based on their impact on the lives of other young people with low vision in their community. This helps them focus their efforts on areas that make a significant difference. Milestones are needed to generate stability and confidence.



When communicating their needs, use clear and specific language. Avoid generalities and abstractions. For example, instead of saying "we need more educational support," they can say we need specific assistive technology resources in classrooms to enable young people with low vision to access educational materials. Another example could be: We invite sunglasses companies to join our cause to provide special glasses that protect sensitive eyes from the sun in people with low vision. Your collaboration can make a big difference. Let's make change possible together!

Here, the way of communicating the backstory and the why and for what the association does comes into play, which is often left unsaid but felt and is what has led them to create an association or to be an active part of one that is already established from the place of value it holds.

These stories must be told; nowadays, storytelling is very much in vogue. As they will have to make use of this tool, later on, they will find examples in Chapter 3 where we will cover Communication, where they will find practical examples of how to tell the story to be heard and to have visibility for their projects among the sea of projects that exist.

Identifying Needs

A solid strategic planning is essential for success in seeking assistance. Here are some steps that can serve as a guide to accomplish it:

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

Evaluate available resources, such as personnel, budget, and time. What do you have at your disposal? And what do you need to acquire to achieve your objectives?

IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE COLLABORATORS

Research and create a list of potential professionals and institutions that may be interested in your cause. For example, you could identify local companies with a track record of supporting community projects. Consider values—if they don't align with yours as an association, it's not worth pursuing that avenue. It's not about quantity; it's about quality because you surely want to partner with entities or individuals who share your values and principles to establish long-term relationships.

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Prepare detailed proposals that describe your needs, objectives, and how collaboration would be beneficial for both parties. For example, a proposal for a company could include a project description, the benefits for the community, and how they could get involved.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Having identified your needs and defined your objectives, you'll be in a stronger position to effectively communicate with institutions or professionals. You'll have concrete data and specific examples to support your requests, increasing the likelihood of being understood and taken seriously.
Design an effective communication strategy to present your needs and objectives convincingly. What do we mean by this? Will you use email, social media, phone calls, or in-person presentations? As you know, having this defined will allow for proper structuring, which will enhance the impact.

SETTING DEADLINES

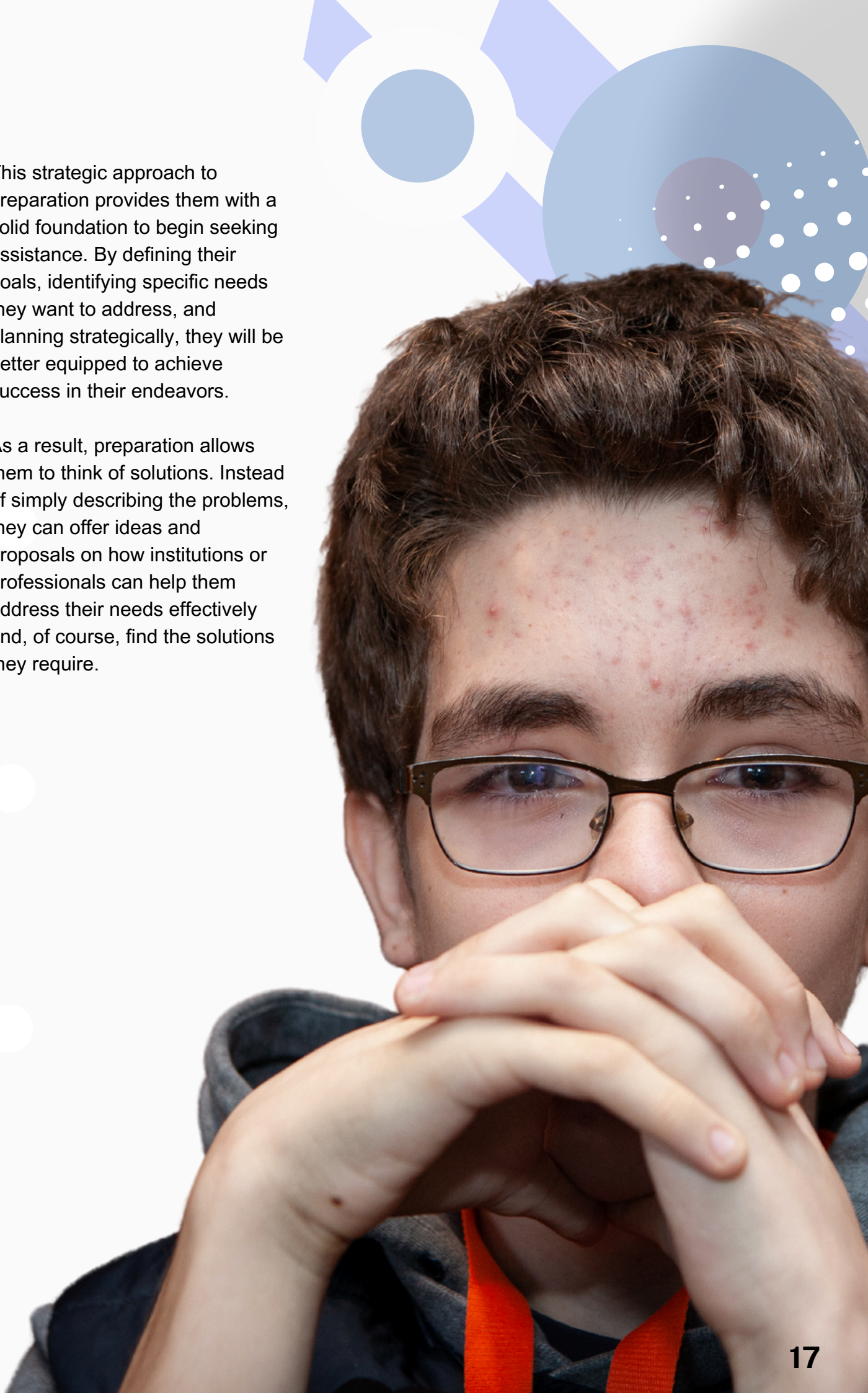
Set deadlines and target dates to achieve your objectives. This will help you stay focused and measure progress. For example, establish a deadline for proposal submission. Of course, you should also consider the deadlines set by institutions, whether private or public, to receive them. Typically, these deadlines are available on the websites of these institutions.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Identify potential obstacles or risks that may arise along the way and develop strategies to mitigate them. For example, consider risks and/or consequences related to funding or resource availability. This is important because in some organizations, associations are required to contribute a percentage to be considered and chosen.

This strategic approach to preparation provides them with a solid foundation to begin seeking assistance. By defining their goals, identifying specific needs they want to address, and planning strategically, they will be better equipped to achieve success in their endeavors.

As a result, preparation allows them to think of solutions. Instead of simply describing the problems, they can offer ideas and proposals on how institutions or professionals can help them address their needs effectively and, of course, find the solutions they require.



CHAPTER 2:
IDENTIFICATION OF PROFESSIONALS AND INSTITUTIONS

“Setting an example isn't the main way to influence others. It's the only way.”

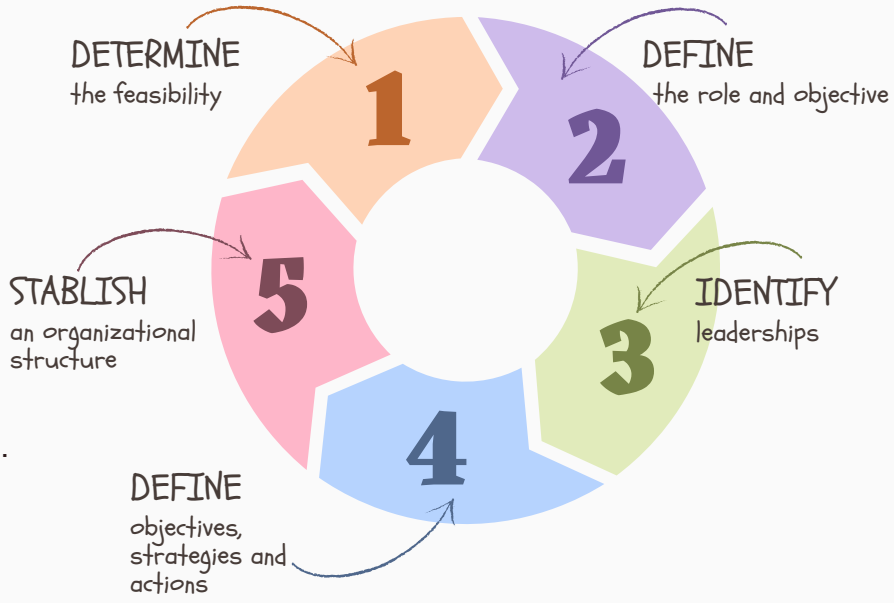
Albert Einstein

Let's imagine together the crucial steps to start identifying potential collaborators, allies, and benefactors for your organization.

The internal consultation that your team must conduct, leading to defining who are those individuals and institutions you can reach out to for assistance and how to find them, is an essential step. It's also a unique opportunity for you to discover the following:

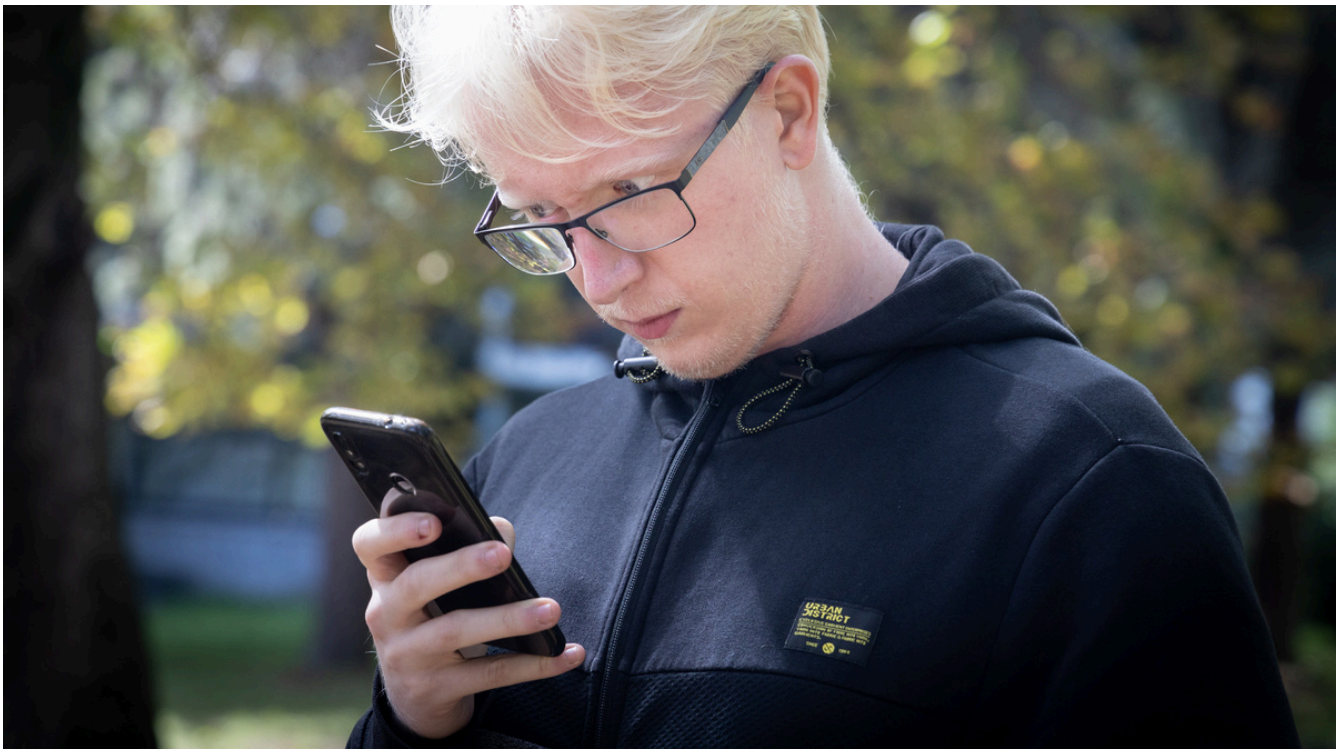
1.Determine Feasibility:

When you undertake the preparatory exercise before seeking external assistance, internally, with the team you've assembled, assess the viability and potential of the association and the projects you've prioritized. This involves having multiple perspectives present to ensure clarity in what you want to convey.



2. Define Role and Objective:
Clarify the purpose and essential function of the association.

3.Identify Leadership:
Recognize and assign leadership roles for effective management of those who will represent the association in these missions. Each member should be clear about this; they should choose one or two individuals who will be, so to speak, the ambassadors of the message the association wishes to convey locally and internationally. However, ALL members are consuls, meaning everyone should have clarity about what the association is pursuing.



4. Define Goals, Strategies, and Activities:
Set clear goals and plan specific strategies and activities. You should know how to communicate and listen. When seeking assistance, you only have one chance to make a good impression, so don't risk losing it.

5. Establish an Organizational Structure:
Determine the internal structure and address administrative matters, as all management must be justified and associated with expenses that need to be anticipated and prepared for.

After this internal consultation, paths with the responsible parties for the activities must be defined, allowing them to identify the professionals and institutions they want to contact to seek assistance. Therefore, it is important to define:

1. How to stimulate and generate collaboration and interest from public and private entities.
2. Exchange Information with Established Social Networks: Define how you will connect with established organizations and relevant stakeholders in your country or abroad.
3. Key Participants: During this process, it is crucial to involve a variety of individuals and groups whom you identify as close. Sometimes, they have contacts or connectors among yourselves or in your personal environments, and because you don't consult internally, you may not know. They can be friends of your family, acquaintances, or simply individuals or entities that are visible, such as:

- Wealthy Citizens
- Individuals committed to the cause and with available contacts.
- Other Non-Profit Institutions: Collaboration with similar organizations and/or business groups.
- Universities and Academic Leaders: Obtain valuable academic perspectives or research to facilitate the way.
- Legal and Accounting Professionals: Legal and financial advice for efficient management.
- Political Leaders: Gain the backing and support of the political sphere if you consider it necessary and viable. In some countries, it may be practically impossible, but in others, it may not, which is why we don't want to exclude this option.
- Community Representatives: Include influential voices from the population the association will serve.

Preparation helps you research and select potential collaborators, those who have a track record of supporting projects or cases similar to yours, and also define the best way to approach those you find who may not have those similarities but are of interest to you. This ensures that your values are aligned with that request and also that it is aligned with the mission and focus of these institutions and professionals, increasing your chances of receiving help.

If the Guide to Establishing an Association was the beginning of the journey, this manual will become that inspiring, curious, and sometimes daring travel companion that allows you to identify the ways to make it sustainable.

2.1 Professional Identification

Finding and contacting professionals related to the association's objectives is essential to ensure that you are collaborating with individuals who share your goals and values. While crucial, it's important not to limit yourself. Exploring and collaborating with experts in related fields, such as inclusion, accessibility, assistive technology, visual impairment in general, and others, can enrich the association's support network and enable you to gather assistance.

These experts can offer fresh perspectives, innovative approaches, and complementary knowledge to what is taken for granted by those with your condition.

It's crucial not to overlook the possibility of finding professionals specializing in issues related to low vision, such as ophthalmologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, or assistive technology specialists. They can provide specific assessments and therapies to help improve your quality of life and clearly convey the message that the world needs to understand about the condition to aid in comprehending why assistance is being sought.

What we'll try to do here is create the common thread that links needs, the search for solutions, and learning that allows for awareness-building so that society accompanies and empathizes with these solutions through ongoing commitment rather than just one-off efforts, ensuring their longevity over time.

Another factor to consider is that by involving experts from various disciplines, a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to the project's objectives can be obtained. This can lead to more innovative and effective solutions, as different perspectives can address problems from various angles.

You need to be realistic and consider certain criteria when deciding to contact these professionals. Just having a good reputation, recognitions, or qualifications are the minimum requirements for them to be on your list to contact. This way, you don't waste time, which is very valuable for those, like you, working in associations, usually on a voluntary basis.



A professional who can be helpful should possess a combination of characteristics, qualities, and skills to provide effective and empathetic support. Here are some of the essential characteristics and skills that they should have. It's worth clarifying that these are just guidelines you can use for selection:

SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

If they are ophthalmologists, optometrists, geneticists, visual rehabilitators, etc., they should have a deep knowledge and understanding of issues related to low vision, including causes, medical conditions, visual aids, assistive technologies, and coping strategies. It's obvious, isn't it? But you should also ensure that they can communicate these effectively. Having someone with an excellent reputation will greatly support your cause.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

They should be effective communicators, capable of conveying information clearly and accessibly. Additionally, they should actively listen to understand your needs. This way, they can be much more persuasive if you invite them to meetings, trainings, or conferences where topics important to you are discussed, or even those you organize to educate other professionals who can collaborate with your cause. And yes, to seek assistance with those activities.

EMPATHY

As you can see, nowadays empathy is essential, as it allows the professional to understand and respond to the personal experiences and challenges of young people with low vision in a sensitive and compassionate manner. If they can convey this to a wider audience, it would greatly help in the awareness-raising process, which is absent due to the lack of information about these challenges.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SKILLS

Psychologists and occupational therapists can provide guidance and emotional support to help young people cope with their personal and emotional challenges related to low vision. Similarly, they can help write articles, notes, or gain visibility on blogs or websites that these individuals may have, as well as accompany and help overcome the consequences that can arise in healthy, talented, and capable individuals like yourselves; bullying and stigmas related to the condition. While not crucial, it is important to have these types of professionals. It greatly helps empower members of your association and, with this, people with criteria, value, and confidence begin to form, who will be the ones to take the baton and advance as an association.

PATIENCE

Young people with low vision may face challenges throughout their lives, and a patient professional can provide ongoing support as they develop and encounter new obstacles.

ADAPTABILITY

They must be able to adapt their approach to the individual needs of each young person, recognizing that low vision varies widely from one person to another. This can be key because surely you will have to make presentations and training sessions that support the actions that must be taken to seek help in public or private institutions. And if they do them, it would be a big hit. These professionals can help you generate awareness of the considerations that must be taken into account in the use of assistive technologies and accessible formats for young people, in the educational field, for example.

CONNECTIONS AND RESOURCES

They must have access to a network of resources and connections with other professionals and organizations that can provide additional support, such as rehabilitation services, special education, and employment. They can also help you apply for grants or financial assistance, which are essential for your association. These individuals can be recognized volunteers in your association.

POSITIVE AND MOTIVATING VISION

They should inspire them to overcome challenges, set goals, and reach their full potential, fostering a positive attitude towards life.

ABILITY TO FOSTER INDEPENDENCE

They should help young people develop self-leadership skills and empowerment, fostering independence in their daily lives and decision-making. We have cases of members of our associations who want to contribute their knowledge and expertise when they graduate from university, and we consider this an achievement of the effort we have put into their well-being and self-leadership.

EVALUATE SUITABILITY AND COMMITMENT

Once identified, it's important to assess the suitability and commitment of the professionals. Suitability can be verified through their track record, experience, levels of client satisfaction, etc. To assess their commitment, ask about their willingness to dedicate time regularly to your cause, to conduct training sessions, and presentations.

Professionals with these characteristics, qualities, and skills play a fundamental role in supporting and empowering the association, helping them overcome obstacles and achieve not only their personal and professional goals but also the goals set by the organization as a whole.



2.2 Identification of Institutions

When it comes to identifying institutions that can collaborate in your cause, it's crucial to conduct thorough research and select those that align with your objectives. As in the previous point, we provide some criteria that can help you identify which institutions, whether private or public, you can contact for collaboration.

Again, we emphasize that this is only a guide, as we know that each country has its own unique processes that vary in complexity and bureaucracy, which no manual can fully address. Therefore, we offer these suggestions:

Support History

Research the track record of institutions to determine if they have previously supported similar initiatives or projects related to low vision and/or visual impairments. If you have decided to collaborate with established associations in your country, you should first investigate whether they already have a list of friendly institutions with whom they have collaborated, so as not to contact them unaware of any previous work that may have been done.

Focus Areas

Check if the institution has specific focus areas, such as education, accessibility, employability, or other relevant topics for young people or individuals with low vision. This way, you can tailor your communication according to the goals they have set and prioritize for the association. We do not recommend using a communication template for everything, as it is evident that it is a general template and you have not taken the time to search for and understand their mission and objectives and how they can align to build solutions together that benefit both parties.

Local, National or International Presence

Evaluate if the institution has a presence at the local, regional, national, or international level. Depending on the needs of the association and the scope they want to have with their projects. Public institutions always have regional offices, and nowadays many of their platforms already have the requirements that must be met to be able to contact them. International institutions have conditions that must be investigated and taken into account if you want to present your projects.

Commitment to Inclusion

The institutions that demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusion and diversity are, of course, the first ones you should consider because they have experience, especially in relation to people with low vision.

Accessibility and Conditions

Review the conditions, requirements, and deadlines they have for receiving requests to ensure they are accessible and feasible for the association. This is very important; it marks the beginning of having all documents and papers ready to attach them in the time and conditions requested.

Network of Collaborators and Alliances

Take note if the institution has a solid network of collaborators and allies. Collaboration with other organizations can indicate a clear collaborative focus. Another interesting point here is that you can easily obtain a list of new contacts by reviewing who they are collaborating with and developing alliances. Consequently, you can even contact them directly, after analyzing their approach, values, and identifying the relationship with your association's goals. In cases where you aim to seek international assistance, such as with the EU, this collaboration with an association that has good experience and presence in any member country is necessary; otherwise, it would not be possible. This is about building a long-term relationship.

Transparency and Responsibility

Look for institutions that demonstrate transparency in their operations and a strong corporate social responsibility. You don't need to have collaborative relationships with institutions that lack clarity and coherence with their own values and mission. No matter how much money they have, if their approach doesn't inspire confidence or they don't have a good reputation in the community, it's better to keep looking.

As an association, you should be responsible and collaborate with institutions that truly represent you. This way, you can avoid having to explain why you received support from institutions with a poor image or unclear finances. This certainly applies to private institutions. For public ones, there may be political considerations, but you should focus on what you need from the ministry, municipality, etc.



Availability of Resources and Funds

Evaluate the financial capacity of the institution to determine if they have resources available to support external projects. Here, you can also investigate who provides these institutions with the resources they use for their projects and activities.



Social Impact

Analyze the social impact of the institution, meaning how they have contributed to the well-being of society through their previous initiatives. Those with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs have projects in social areas and often invest in themselves or in associative projects that interest them for the impact and reputation they can generate. Of course, it must have been established for a few years so that you can see that impact. If it's newly created, they won't have success stories to show and therefore may not be plausible collaborators.

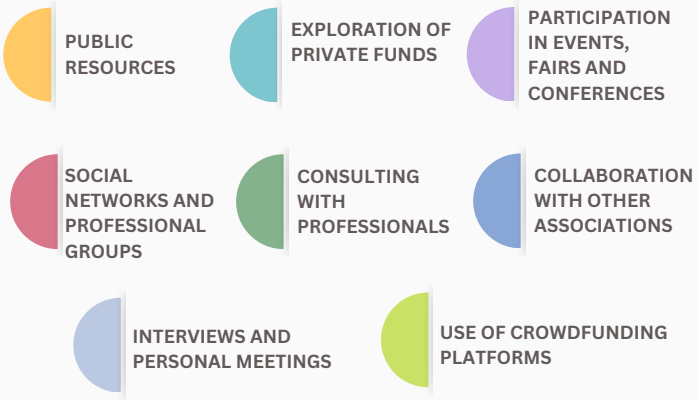
Steps to find them

Participating in the process of creating an association or being part of an already established one, it's essential that the local and international actors you identify and choose can facilitate access to their associative experience and resources so that you can generate impact and, of course, achieve the changes you aim for.

Local and/or international entities (all institutions you identify across the four continents, NGOs, and aid agencies) are sometimes crucial partners during the process of creating the organization and also supporting the projects you need to carry out for the benefit of your members. This helps you start achieving milestones that allow you to gain the recognition you deserve and need to continue gathering assistance and developing your projects.

Generally, when seeking help from professionals and institutions, they will offer technical expertise, financial support, and, if desired, even knowledge on how to make your proposals stand out among many others to support your objectives.

Here are some criteria to find the professionals and institutions that will help you gather the assistance you are looking for your projects. Our recommendation is that for at least a few months, you should research the following:



Social Networks and Professional Groups

Únanse a grupos en redes sociales y foros en línea relacionados con los temas que les interesa abordar. Participen activamente y busquen recomendaciones de instituciones y profesionales que puedan brindar apoyo.

Public resources

Consult the websites of government agencies related to visual impairments, inclusion, and rare disease research in your country. Look for specific grant programs, services, and supports available. Seek out the responsible individuals for these programs; they may not be directly accessible, and there might be a general email address for communications. If you address your communications to the responsible person by name, their colleagues within the government agency are more likely to respond. If not, your communications might go unnoticed or unanswered.

We recommend not only relying on online communication but also sending physical copies with proof of receipt. Another approach is to attend events hosted by these government agencies in your country. This way, you can learn about projects that could benefit you and, if applicable, explain how your projects could strengthen their existing programs. By defining a problem and providing a solution, strategically impacting them, you're not just asking for help; you're offering valuable information in exchange for assistance, attention, or funding.

Exploration of Private Funds

Research private foundations and philanthropic organizations that may be interested in supporting projects related to visual impairments or any of the challenges you face, such as education, employment, or inclusion. Visit their websites and look for details about the criteria they use for granting funding. Similarly, investigate high-impact private companies in your region; many of them are interested in supporting projects not only through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs but also because they can benefit financially by supporting initiatives like the ones you present to them. Alternatively, they may seek to improve their reputation by contributing to projects that enhance conditions for others.

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Participation in Events, Fairs and Conferences

Attend events and conferences on topics that interest you, such as advances in education, classroom technology, mentoring or volunteering programs, visual impairments, and visual health. Establish connections with professionals, representatives of organizations, and potential sponsors who may support your cause.



Consulting with Professionals in the Third Sector

Seek the advice of professionals in the field of low vision, visual impairment, education, and nonprofit organization management. Establish connections with professionals who can guide you on effective strategies.

Interviews and Personal Meetings

Request interviews or personal meetings with representatives of institutions, companies, and key professionals that you have identified as aligned with your cause. Present your initiative, your objectives clearly, and explore possible ways of collaboration.

Collaboration with Other Associations

Collaborate with other associations working in related areas. Inquire about their experiences with public and private institutions and learn from their successes and challenges. It's not about copying, but about learning and minimizing steps to reach the goal. Collaboration has great advantages if organized well and with clarity; otherwise, it could be a discouraging experience due to power struggles. Therefore, it's vital to have clear roles and responsibilities.

Use of Crowdfunding Platforms

Explore crowdfunding platforms for social projects (commonly known as crowdfunding) mentioned in the Methodological Guide for Creating an Association or search online for those available in your country. Prepare fundraising campaigns that can attract the attention of individual donors.

As you can see, it all seems repetitive, easy, logical, but we believe that practice will teach you that the path is made as you have the desire and willingness to face the challenges it poses. Remember, it's a journey. This can help you not only to raise funds but also to validate your project ideas, increase your audience or community, gain free publicity, increase your exposure on social media, and even in mainstream media. By receiving feedback on the campaign, you can understand and refine the way you communicate your needs. If successful, you'll have a milestone, which is a significant achievement that you can use to demonstrate the positive impact the association is generating.





It seems like long steps with many implicit actions, and you're certainly right. However, we want to ensure that you refine your research efforts, persistence, and clarity with each step. In some cases of collaboration with other associations, the more experienced ones can even provide you with the model from which they defined the structure of their association and the path they took to obtain the support they needed, both from individuals and institutions. This is the case that sheds light on this manual.

The partners in this project have leveraged the experience that each one has gained in their associative journey, and with the financial support of **ERASMUS+** (which funds the project and audits it to demonstrate that the money has been well used), these two documents have resulted, which you have today to learn from and consult on two important topics: the birth of your association and its sustainability, which contribute to framing this general project of "Together for Inclusion."

We hope that these suggestions we offer not only help you to learn but especially to act and achieve that your association sustains itself and achieves the objectives that have been set.

Remember to adapt these criteria according to the specific needs of the association and the local conditions. Careful research and strategic selection will help you identify the most suitable institutions and professionals to collaborate with your noble cause. As Machado said, "The path is made by walking."

CHAPTER 3:

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

“The one who knows how to think but cannot express what they think is on the same level as the one who cannot think.”

Pericles

Persuading others to join your ideas is relevant; attempting to persuade them to take appropriate actions that benefit both you and themselves is the key to effective communication.

The truth is that communicating is persuading, so what does this mean? Persuading is inducing, moving someone (with reasons) to do something. When we persuade, we do not force; instead, we present arguments that produce a change in perspective in the listener; we are influencing, not coercing. This concept can become tainted because unconsciously, certain negative connotations may be added, such as manipulation or lack of ethics. Often, we associate it with the typical salesperson who uses all sorts of deceptive tactics to make people end up buying a product or service they don't need. They lie and exaggerate everything, and this is what needs to change. You are not typical salespeople; you are persuasive. Your mission is to persuade.

Highly persuasive individuals, as opposed to manipulators who only seek their own benefit, not only seek their own benefit; they are empathetic, generous, and genuinely open to helping others, and they do so, always seeking the benefit of both parties. This is what matters; it is the crux of the matter in an association when seeking assistance. These individuals do not think in the short term but in long-term relationships. That is why it is so important for you to cultivate empathy. We talk a lot about this in the Guide. Not only to be better people but also to avoid falling into the category of manipulators. You must be persuasive, always with the utmost integrity and honesty. Your cause warrants it.

Influential individuals are precisely known for their integrity. What matters here is that you are, that you understand what is important about this virtue because without it, it is very difficult to generate trust in the interlocutor, and let's be clear, you know it. As young people in the midst of the third millennium, you are already tired and bored of words that are not backed up by actions.



Persuading doesn't mean exerting pressure on the person to say yes. Persuasion requires persistence, but not pushiness. In fact, one of the objectives of this chapter is to help you build that trust with the institutions or individuals you want to work with so that your goals can become a reality.

Persuasion is the most important skill in this era of knowledge, and this skill is developed in the now famous storytelling, which relies on stories and analogies to create greater impact and emotion.

For us, it's the ability to showcase your unique value proposition with conviction and eloquence. And your value proposition is the reason why you created an association and develop your projects.

In this chapter, we will explore how to effectively communicate with professionals and institutions that can collaborate with your association.

3.1 Initial Contact

You already know that you should prepare yourselves, that you must research and thoroughly understand the institution, whether it's public or private, and/or the professionals you're interested in contacting. Get to know their mission, motivations, values, and previous projects related to the areas of interest for your association. Now, let's look at some ways to establish the initial contact, but before that, you must truly understand what persuasion is all about.

ELEMENTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY



Authenticity

In the vast universe of communication, authenticity emerges as a luminous beacon that guides interactions and shapes the effectiveness of the message being conveyed or delivered. Being authentic is not just a personal value but a powerful catalyst for persuasive and genuine communication.

Authenticity establishes solid ground for connection. When communicating from a genuine place, doors open to empathy and understanding. It's like the spark that ignites the flame of trust; by being transparent and true, we build strong bridges upon which any message can rest.

At the heart of effective communication lies the ability to inspire confidence. Authenticity becomes its most valuable ally when seeking to persuade others and when seeking support. People don't just hear our words; they also feel the authenticity behind them. Therefore, by being authentic, we remove barriers that could hinder the acceptance of our ideas and requests.

Moreover, authenticity evokes emotional resonance. When we share our experiences sincerely, we touch shared emotional chords. Authentic stories have the power to inspire, motivate, and, most importantly, create a lasting connection. In a world saturated with information, authenticity stands out as a magnet that attracts genuine attention and engagement.

In effective communication, authenticity becomes the rudder that guides our words toward the desired impact. To persuade, people not only seek information but also authenticity from the messenger. Authenticity is not just about being honest but about being true to one's essence, expressing convictions and values coherently.

When we are authentic, we don't just communicate words or data; we transmit like a magnetic force that invites others to listen, understand, and ultimately, act. Both senders and receivers are inundated with messages from social media, the internet, and various other sources of information today, making authenticity the differentiating element that resonates and endures in the minds and hearts of those around us.

Therefore, don't let laziness or convenience make you lose this important value when communicating what you want.

Ultimately, being authentic is not just a means to an end, but a continuous journey towards deeper connection, more impactful communication, and more meaningful relationships.

Inside and outside your association, authenticity is not only an admirable trait but also the foundation upon which we build bridges that connect people and transform words into meaningful actions.

Maya Angelou, an American poet and activist, said a phrase that can contribute a lot to summarizing the importance of being authentic: "People will forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Elevator pitch

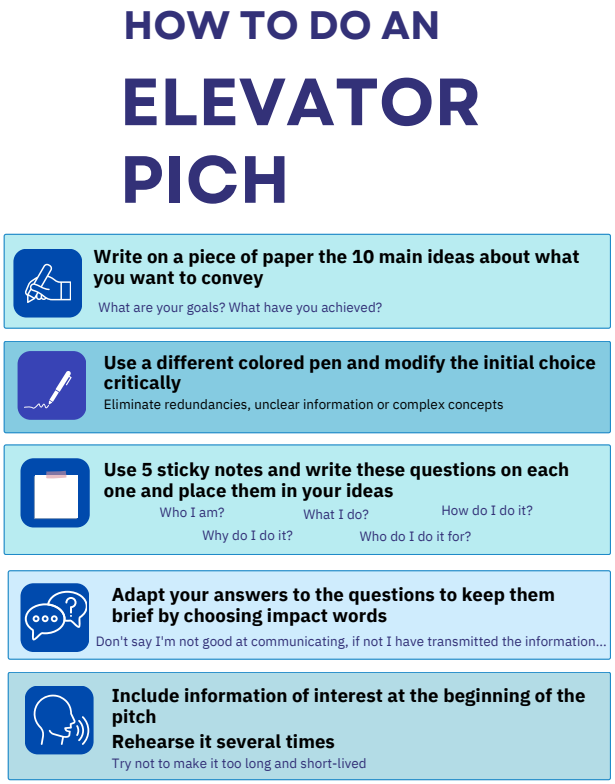
This is a concept that was created in the 1980s by Philip B. Crosby, an American businessman focused on quality management.

An "elevator pitch" is a brief presentation aimed at capturing someone's attention in as short a time as it takes to ride in an elevator, typically ranging from 30 seconds to 2 minutes. It is commonly used in situations where you need to effectively and persuasively communicate who you are, what you do, and why they should be interested in you, all within that brief timeframe.

The fundamental goal of the elevator pitch is to synthesize a message and have it grab someone's attention in a few seconds, resulting in a future interview or meeting with that person.

It doesn't imply anything different than capturing the attention of someone you're interested in. What matters is that the message is clear, emotional, persuasive, short, and impactful.

Can you imagine, finding yourself at a fair, congress, or event with the CEO of a company that designs and creates technological solutions for educational environments? What would you say to them? We'll see this with an example, and thus, we'll show the steps we suggest should be followed to ensure the message is clear, emotional, concise, persuasive, and impactful.



START

It doesn't imply anything different than capturing the attention of those who interest you. What matters is that the message is clear, emotional, persuasive, concise, and impactful.

SHOCKING STATEMENT

We have identified a significant challenge that students with low vision face in our schools and universities. Often, we find ourselves dealing with barriers that hinder our effective participation in classes, and, even more concerning, we face stigma and mockery that negatively impact our educational experience.

SOLUTION

I want to propose a solution that we believe can make a real difference. We want to be part of the classroom aids that you develop and that can include students with low vision. Imagine the positive impact we could achieve by providing specialized tools and resources that allow us to follow classes effectively and, at the same time, educate our peers about our capabilities.

PERSONAL HISTORY

I want to tell you a story that illustrates the importance of this initiative. A few years ago, while attending a class at my school, I found myself facing one of the most significant challenges that low vision can present. The teacher had projected a crucial diagram on the board, but from my seat, I couldn't distinguish the important details. My classmates, without malice, were immersed in the lesson, while I struggled to follow along and understand the content.

In that moment, I realized the gap between my classmates' experiences and mine. I imagined how different it would have been if I had access to specialized technologies or tools that allowed me to visualize that diagram clearly and participate fully in the discussion. The difference in my educational experience would have been monumental.

These everyday barriers not only impact my learning, but also contribute to my classmates' misconceptions about my abilities. That's where the importance of classroom aids for students with low vision lies. They're not just tools; they're bridges that connect us to equal learning opportunities and allow us to shine for our abilities, not our limitations.

CALL TO ACTION

I'm here not only to request your support, but also to propose a broader collaboration. We want to work with your company to develop a school tool that promotes inclusion and understanding of these types of challenges in as many schools as possible. Imagine the positive impact we could achieve by changing perceptions and creating a more inclusive educational environment.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

We are willing to work closely with your team to develop and implement this initiative. We would love to schedule a meeting with you to further discuss how we can collaborate and bring this vision to life.

CLOSING

I want you to understand that we are here not only as advocates for our own cause, but as partners willing to work hand in hand to improve the quality of the products you develop for the educational sector and make it truly education for all. Your support would mean a crucial step towards a more inclusive and equitable future in our classrooms.
Thank you for your time, Mr. [Entrepreneur's Name]. We are eager for the opportunity to work together and make a lasting difference in the educational inclusion of our country. Would it be possible for us to schedule a meeting for next week to show you how our approach can contribute to your company?

These steps will help you craft a 2-minute elevator pitch. The presentation, which is often nerve-wracking, should be delivered calmly, introducing yourselves with your names and roles in the association. Then, follow with a striking statement, something that grabs immediate attention.

This could be a relevant statistic, an intriguing question, or a surprising statement for the listener. Prepare it for each interlocutor and for each goal you want to achieve. Above, we provided just one example.

By highlighting the solution, emphasize the unique value proposition that your association has in that area or towards that objective. Focus on what you need and what sets you apart from other proposals or requests. These individuals, whether from public or private entities, receive many requests and inquiries. Use simple and authentic language (avoid unnecessary jargon) to explain what you offer as a solution.

Ensure that your words paint a clear and easily understandable picture. The more concrete you are, the better.

With the story you tell, which should be real and authentic, you pique the interest of your audience. Make them want to know more by leaving some details untold and allowing room for curiosity.

Conclude your pitch with a clear request or call to action that you would like them to take. This could be a follow-up meeting, collaboration, or any other specific action.

And of course, practice and adjust. Practicing the elevator pitch will make you feel more comfortable and natural. Repetition leads to perfection. You can do role-playing within the association to prepare. Doing it with people who know and share the same goals is a way to release tension and feel natural when the time comes.

Adjust your pitch based on the feedback you receive and the responses of your audience during practice. Take your time! This is important. Don't be discouraged if you get interrupted (sometimes people can be abrupt). You are doing what is necessary, and sometimes these experiences hide lessons of strength and improvement.

Remember that the key is to be clear, concise, and convincing. Your goal is to leave a lasting impression and open the door for future conversations or collaborations.

Charisma

You can learn and improve, it's not necessary to be extroverted. It's no coincidence that charisma is connected with success. While it's true that nobody is charismatic 24 hours a day, being captivating and magnetic on the day you'll meet an interlocutor you need to develop a relationship of collaboration and assistance is essential. The next day, you can be completely boring and ungraceful. It's a joke.



Being charismatic is the result of exhibiting a series of behaviors that will be perceived as such. One can change their personal magnetism with practice and awareness of body language, that's what Steve Jobs did.

How can you train your charisma?

1. Body Language: Without realizing it, we are constantly sending messages to others through our body - the way we move and gesture. The rest of the people also receive the message unconsciously.

Body language clearly conveys all emotions that exist. In order to convey the charisma you desire, you must be in a state of harmony and positivity so that you transmit it to your interlocutors. Body language communicates everything; it's the biggest gossip we have. If you don't feel good, you transmit this with your body language.

A fake smile conveys something to the other person that they don't understand well and can't define, and it gives an image of insecurity and, in the worst case, of being fake. So, you know, you can tell what a person feels by the expression on their face and their body. When a correct mental state is generated, an incredible energy is automatically transmitted to the body.

Here's a technique where in critical moments, nerves can play tricks on you in a meeting or interview. Visualize, imagine the outcomes you desire; the key is to do this before those meetings, and make it very detailed, see in advance how everything you want to achieve turns out well. This helps reduce anxiety, tricking the brain, so you can enter the conversation in a more relaxed state, feeling confident and assured that things will go very well. Feel like superheroes of your association because you are. And breathe. Breathe to oxygenate the body and mind. Remember that the body is a mirror of the mind. We show what we think.



2. Showing Interest: One of the most important moments in a relationship is the beginning. We can come to realize whether we like our interlocutor or not, or if they could potentially become a friend. First impressions are always crucial. In the first few seconds, we draw conclusions about a person.

Maintain clear eye contact with the person; if you're introverted, you must make a greater effort. This visual connection increases oxytocin, helps build connection and trust. Do it in any interaction. Try it out.

Handshakes are also communicators; when hands firmly come into contact and are squeezed briefly and without excess, and eye contact is maintained at that moment, you can smile, conveying that you are happy to be there and spreading your positive energy to your interlocutor.

Don't cross your arms; stand up straight, animated. Otherwise, it conveys a lack of interest. If you put your hands behind your neck, it reads as nervousness or doubt. The hand on the mouth conveys indecision and lack of confidence.

Feeling a genuine interest in the other person generates a pleasant sensation. Then, what will matter to them and to you is how they felt, and especially how you made them feel. That first impression is what opens or closes doors. Did they feel valued? Recognized? Was it an encounter that made them feel close? Was it pleasant? All of this will be part of the evaluation that both you and the others will make, consciously and unconsciously, and it's important to consider because you are the ones seeking help.

Another thing that is sometimes overlooked due to nerves is having curiosity and showing genuine interest in the life of your interlocutor. Questions like, "How many years have you been here?" allow the interlocutors to feel appreciated, valued by you. It should be an act of genuineness; do it if it's truly sincere, if you like the office, say so. You don't know that human being with whom you want to do things, receive help, generate a bond, so asking questions is valid and builds trust.

Finding common ground allows you to have a quicker connection with the people you're interacting with. Look on LinkedIn, try to establish an emotional connection, repeat people's names several times. That mental effort is important; it fosters closeness and makes them feel valued. If you didn't hear it well, don't be embarrassed to ask again. The name is important; think about whether you would like to be called by another name that isn't yours.





3. Active listening: Being fully present and attentive, without interruptions, is a unique experience that demonstrates charisma. Yes, we know it can be difficult for you because you lose interest very quickly, and this helps us tell you that it's the same for them. If you learn to read between the lines and stop thinking about what you're going to say in response and instead listen to your interlocutor, it creates an incredible atmosphere of trust, connection, and loyalty. People can tell when you're not really there.

Interrupting and not letting the other person finish or share their appreciation for what the other person is saying, looking away, or at your phone, conveys an image of total disinterest. We understand that it's not easy to stay present; we lose focus quickly, get distracted, do you know why? Because we think faster than we speak.

Remove distractions from the environment (phone, laptop, watch, don't even think about looking away). Listen. If you start to drift off, pay attention to the color of the other person's eyes, focus on that, and it will bring you back to the present.

Nod occasionally, as if trying to convey to the other person with that gesture that you're saying: "Of course, interesting, I understand."

And smile, as you follow along with their reasoning; of course, this should be natural and genuine. Otherwise, it would be a bit odd, don't you think?

Paraphrase, using your own words to restate what the person has said. One way to do this is to start by saying, "Let me see if I understand you correctly," (use the formal manner of address appropriate in your country). Then continue with a summary of what the other person has said and what you have understood. Being a good listener helps you persuade because you will understand what motivates the other person. Once you know their motivating factors, you can convince much more effectively. And that makes you very charismatic. All of this is learned through practice and is valuable not only because you have a role within the association but also because as human beings, you have many social interactions, and applying this will help you improve them.



4. Credibility: Without credibility, it is not possible to be charismatic or highly persuasive. The more knowledge you possess and the more refined your skills are, the greater your credibility. Whether you are giving a presentation or meeting with a government official, entrepreneur, or professional, you must position yourselves as truly expert individuals and demonstrate to your audience that you are competent and knowledgeable about the topic you are addressing.

This will be impossible if you do not have the expertise to present yourselves as highly skilled individuals. Ultimately, people want to listen to you because you have persuaded them, you have secured that meeting through the passion with which you express your goals and the projects you want to make a reality as an association. Therefore, even if you feel too young and inexperienced, a good reputation is built with expertise so that your ideas are heard. Humans are drawn to powerful individuals who have credibility and make us feel good, creating a sense of closeness.

If you feel insecure before attending a meeting or giving a presentation, surely you have someone nearby who knows how to do this, or you can seek a mentor who is truly a role model to help you improve your skills and provide specific advice.

Another thing that can help is cultivating the habit of reading more books. With this daily exercise, which can take only 15 to 30 minutes, you build general knowledge and grow as individuals. It helps you have conversations and break the ice, positioning you with authority in terms of knowledge and, in turn, increasing your cultural awareness.

Credibility helps you create an impeccable first impression. Don't forget to smile, maintain good posture, and make eye contact.

5. Passion: Showing passion in your presentations generates a powerful energy that makes your audience connect with you and pay full attention. It is the most potent way to generate emotion and therefore persuasion. If you do this, it will trigger a whole process because, with greater passion, comes greater enthusiasm, greater connection with those who listen to you, which generates effective communication.

Find what generates enthusiasm and passion for your goals. Ask yourself: What generates adrenaline in me? What activity am I so passionate about that I lose track of time? This will help you realize.

Flow, being in tune, in the zone, hyperconnected, and immersed in activity, is where time is lost. In what activities are you able to find that flow? People should feel that you are passionate about the topic you are discussing; persuasion is ineffective if you lack passion or conviction in what you are talking about. The body generates powerful energy that connects. You know this, you have felt it, you have seen how certain speeches or conversations with people disconnect you.

Therefore, we recommend moving away from complaints, negative thoughts that distract you, and topics like the system not changing or why bother speaking if you won't achieve anything. This kind of outlook interrupts the flow and therefore annihilates passion. The effort to create new conditions, to stir consciences, is not easy, and you need to sustain yourselves so that these negative feelings, emotions, or thoughts are neutralized. We're not saying you shouldn't have them; we have them ourselves, but we don't dwell on them. We continue to move forward so that you, the new generations, can be infected and build the world you deserve. Passion cannot be faked; it is essential to be sincere with ourselves. Understand why, for what, the purpose behind the topics that excite you, as we do with ours. That passion is here, in the pages of this manual, and we want you to be drawn to it like us, to create and believe that anything is possible.

6. Reciprocity: In the fabric of communication, reciprocity emerges as a powerful art, a bridge that connects senders and receivers through the exchange of messages. This fundamental principle suggests that by giving, we create a conducive space to receive in return, thus establishing a virtuous cycle of interaction.

Reciprocity is not simply a transactional act; it is a strategy that transcends words. The goal is not to achieve help or grants; the goal is to open the door to trust and willingness to listen and be listened to. It is the act of giving something valuable before asking for something in return, creating a dynamic of collaboration rather than a simple exchange.

The power of reciprocity lies in its ability to create a sense of ethical obligation. When someone perceives that we have invested in their well-being or provided something of value without expecting an immediate reward, a natural impulse towards reciprocity is generated. The other party feels inclined to respond positively, thus establishing a stronger connection.

Reciprocity is not limited to material assistance; it encompasses the delivery of valuable information, emotional support, and, in simple terms, any gesture that enriches the recipient's experience. This generosity creates an environment conducive to receiving the message with openness and receptivity.

In today's digital world, reciprocity finds new modes of expression. Sharing relevant content, offering useful resources, or simply providing a space for active participation are contemporary ways of practicing communicative generosity. Attention and engagement become currency, and reciprocity is the key to gaining this valuable resource.

By employing reciprocity in communication, the goal is to build authentic and lasting relationships. By giving first, we create an environment where our proposals are not just requests but requests backed by a history of trust and collaboration.

Ultimately, reciprocity is not just a tactical principle; it is a way of approaching communication with empathy and consideration. It is the recognition that, in the act of giving, we create fertile ground where our words are not only heard but also valued.

In the dance of persuasion, reciprocity is the melody that harmonizes our interactions and transforms persuasion into a shared, unique, and beneficial experience for all.

7. Story Telling: In the universe of persuasive communication, storytelling emerges as a transformative force, a masterful tool that goes beyond words and delves into the heart of the human experience. Telling stories is not simply conveying information; it is about awakening emotions and guiding the audience on a meaningful journey, to that destination that we have planned. Stories are the universal currency of empathy. By telling stories, we build bridges that connect shared experiences, creating fertile ground for the audience to not only understand our message but also to emotionally immerse themselves in it. In persuasive communication, emotions are the master key that unlocks the door to acceptance and action.

Storytelling is based on the simple truth that people remember experiences more than data. Yes, we've already said it here, but it's worth repeating. Stories, being vivid and engaging, become ingrained in memory, creating a lasting connection. When we share powerful narratives, we are not just conveying information; we are creating moments that resonate and endure.

At the heart of storytelling lies the ability to breathe life into data. It transforms figures and facts into characters, challenges, and triumphs. When we present information in the form of a story, we not only educate but also enlighten. The audience becomes part of the story, feeling every twist and turn as if experiencing the narrative in real-time.

A well-told story has the power to change perspectives. It can challenge preconceptions, inspire action, and forge connections between the sender and the audience. Narrative allows us to explore the 'why' behind what we do, giving our messages a deeper and more meaningful purpose.

In effective communication, storytelling follows a structure that envelops the audience. It begins with a captivating introduction, presents a conflict or challenge, culminates in an emotional climax, and concludes with a satisfying resolution that reinforces the central message. This structure creates an experiential journey that captures and holds attention. Remember the example of the elevator pitch.

In today's digital landscape, social media platforms and multimedia content offer exceptional opportunities to unleash the power of storytelling. From poignant posts to impactful videos, storytelling adapts to various formats to reach diverse audiences.

Each of these strategies brings a unique element that contributes to building meaningful connections and mobilizing resources. Integrating these strategies into the manual not only makes communication effective but also maximizes opportunities to engage the community, secure resources, and advance the association's mission. A strong communication strategy is the key to garnering support from public, private, local, and international institutions, as well as professionals who add value to your cause.





3.2 Communication strategies

The transition towards resource mobilization represents a significant shift in the association's communication strategy. To ensure success in this direction, it is essential to implement a comprehensive strategy. Here are some suggestions of what we consider should be taken into account:

1. Develop a Strategic Narrative
2. Identify Potential Partners
3. Customize Collaboration Proposals
4. Emphasize Long-Term Impact
5. Financial Transparency
6. Two-way communication
7. Highlight Successes and Lessons Learned

Communication strategies

8. Impactful Presentations
9. Connection Events
10. Specific Marketing Materials
11. Collaborations with Companies
12. Donor Program
13. Personalized Email Strategy
14. Public and Private Recognition
15. Consistent Tracking

DEVELOP A STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

We have already seen this in the previous point, and we have stopped and delved into it with the clear intention of raising awareness about all the details that must be covered to create a narrative that highlights the long-term vision and comprehensive agenda of the association. Explain how resource mobilization will directly contribute to the overall mission and generate sustainable impact.

DEVELOP A STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

Conducting a comprehensive analysis to identify potential partners who share similar values and objectives is crucial. Establishing clear criteria for partner selection ensures effective alignment with the association's agenda.

CUSTOMIZE COLLABORATION PROPOSALS

Developing personalized collaboration proposals for each potential partner is essential. These proposals should highlight how the association and the individual or institution can work together to achieve mutual goals, emphasizing the synergy between both parties.

EMPHASIZE LONG-TERM IMPACT

Clearly communicate how the resources gathered (whether represented in money, seminar presentations, donations, discounts on products or services for members, etc.) will enable a more significant and sustainable impact over time. Emphasize the value of long-term investments rather than isolated donations or aid.

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Provide detailed information about financial management and the use of funds. Transparency is key to building the trust of potential partners, who will want to understand how their contributions will directly contribute to the association's goals. It would be very important for you to have an official audit demonstrating the economic transparency of the association, as this can be positively valued by entities from which you may receive grants.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Encourage open two-way communication with potential partners. Listening to their goals and concerns will allow for more effective adaptation of collaboration proposals and the building of strong relationships. Here, there's no room for suspicion. You must understand that if you seek assistance, potential partners in this endeavor are those who have what you need. Therefore, you should be open and trust them so that they, in turn, trust you and the good use you will make of what they can provide.

HIGHLIGHT SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Share success stories and lessons learned from previous experiences. This not only validates the association's ability to work effectively with partners but also establishes a positive track record.

IMPACTFUL PRESENTATIONS

Develop impactful presentations that highlight the vision, mission, and objectives of the association. These presentations should clearly articulate how resource mobilization will benefit both the association and potential partners. Send personalized impact reports to donors, highlighting how their contribution has specifically contributed to the successes and achievements of the association. Use data and testimonials to illustrate the social return on investment.

CONNECTION EVENTS

Organize specific events to connect with potential partners. These events will provide a conducive environment for dialogue, relationship building, and a more detailed presentation of the association's vision and strategy. They can be online or in-person events where partners can interact with beneficiaries, association leaders, and other potential partners. Create experiences that reinforce the emotional connection and the importance of their support.

SPECIFIC MARKETING MATERIALS

Create specific marketing materials that highlight the benefits and opportunities of resource mobilization. These materials may include brochures, videos, impact reports, and other visual resources. Design targeted social media campaigns aimed at potential partners. Use segmented ads and personalized content to emphasize the need for their contribution and how it can be transformative.

COLLABORATIONS WITH COMPANIES

Seek partnerships with companies willing to make corporate contributions. Highlight these collaborations as examples of support and social commitment. Nowadays, this is often done through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

MONTHLY (OR ANNUAL) DONOR PROGRAM

Implement a monthly (or annual) donor program that encourages regular contributions. You can offer exclusive benefits such as personalized updates and access to special events to maintain long-term commitment. This can be targeted within the association's membership environment.

PERSONALIZED EMAIL STRATEGY

Send personalized emails to current and potential partners or collaborators. Use stories, images, and regular updates to keep them informed about the progress and evolution of the initiatives.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RECOGNITION

Publicly acknowledge professionals and institutions through social media, events, and promotional materials. Additionally, offer private and personalized recognition to strengthen the relationship and the sense of belonging to the association's community.

CONNECTION EVENTS

Implement a consistent tracking system to keep potential partners informed and engaged. Regular follow-up strengthens the relationship and demonstrates the association's ongoing commitment. Consistent follow-up could involve monthly milestone reviews, assessment of key metrics, and adaptation of strategies as needed to ensure continued success.

The communication strategy should focus on establishing relationships for resource mobilization and should be consistent, transparent, and aimed at building solid foundations. By effectively communicating the vision, value, and benefits, the association can attract committed partners who will contribute significantly to the achievement of its comprehensive agenda.

From our experience, the role of the association's communications developer should be assumed by someone who is truly dedicated to it 100%. It cannot be a member who is a volunteer. We have emphasized the importance of this role because, as we will see in the following chapters, it is essential for raising funds. This role is one of those that should be recognized with a monthly payment to ensure it is truly balanced for whoever undertakes it. This role should be part of the association's staff, just like the person dedicated to the fundraising activities of the association, who will use the effective communication strategies and tactics developed throughout this chapter. These two roles work hand in hand to generate results.



CHAPTER 4
COLLABORATION PROPOSAL

“Success is moving from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.”

Winston Churchill

In the constant pursuit of strengthening our impact and improving the lives of people with low vision, the associations involved in this project understand that regardless of the path you choose to take, whether it's creating a new association or joining an existing one to further strengthen it, this is a crucial chapter of your journey: the creation of solid collaborations with professionals and institutions committed to the association's cause.

Through this manual, you are discovering communication strategies, steps, and approaches to present persuasive collaboration proposals that not only inspire but also generate meaningful and long-term commitment.

From building bridges with professionals specialized in visual care to establishing strategic partnerships with educational and business institutions, whether public or private, the goal is to raise awareness about the importance of having a dedicated person in charge of fundraising for your association.

Why? Because by having a person solely focused on generating, developing, and maintaining relationships that the association wants to have in order to gather the assistance and alliances they need, as well as participating in fundraising contests and fairs, that person can specialize in the techniques that enable them to do so without improvisation, which is what the majority do.

Specialization is relevant today because it requires working in an organized and efficient manner so that those funds and resources from large companies and institutions are closely linked to their needs. This allows them to achieve the milestones they require and, therefore, build long-term relationships. It's not just about receiving occasional assistance but also about obtaining strategic allies that enable them to project the image the association should project outwardly. It's about ethical order and efficiency, which are highly valued today. It's not only about doing a magnificent job; it's also about managing and communicating it.

How to translate that passion into tangible proposals and how to establish fruitful relationships that lead your cause to new horizons? By tackling challenges with ingenuity, seizing opportunities with enthusiasm, structuring messages with creativity, and approaching collaboration with an open-door mindset. Because in the quest for the much-needed recognition of this low vision condition, we recognize that true greatness lies in the unity of minds and hearts committed to a common purpose. This is what sustains us and what encourages us to continue in order to make ourselves visible in a world that renders us invisible. The task is serious, not complicated.

Before we begin, we want you to have clarity about the skills and knowledge that you must keep in mind when generating collaboration proposals. Among them, we highlight:

WHAT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BEFORE GENERATING COLLABORATION PROPOSALS?

01 Understanding the socio-economic conditions of your country and how they affect you



02 Knowledge of existing institutions and networks involved with similar problems



03 Knowledge of local laws governing the nonprofit sector



04 Accounting experience and, in particular, knowledge of fund administration and tax laws in force in your country



05 Have contact with organizations or people that could provide national or international support



06 Knowledge of non-governmental organizations, particularly how they are managed, what structure they may have and what challenges they have faced



We know that the way to channel national or international aid and resources may be relatively new in many countries. There are many fairs, events, projects, and funds, both private and public, where people representing associations have 3 or a maximum of 4 minutes to present their proposals. Those that grab attention are invited to delve deeper, making presentations and having interviews with more time.

The adrenaline generated brings obstacles to life in young associations (new or less than 5 years old), including lack of information and an uncertain financial context depending on the country they are in.

We emphasize here that collaboration with local or international associations can help overcome some of these obstacles by providing information, good models, and technical and financial assistance, if this is part of the services they offer, as not all do. This way, you can adapt the idea to your association's context. As you can see, everything we have outlined so far regarding effective communication in Chapter 3 aims to lay the groundwork for these collaboration proposals.

How to translate that passion into tangible proposals and how to establish fruitful relationships that take your cause to new horizons?



Approaching challenges with ingenuity, seizing opportunities with enthusiasm, structuring messages with creativity, and collaborating with an open-minded mindset. Because in the pursuit of the much-needed recognition of this condition of low vision, we recognize that true greatness lies in the union of minds and hearts committed to a common purpose. This is what keeps us going and what encourages us to continue in order to make ourselves visible in a world that often renders us invisible. The task is serious, not complicated.

Before we begin, we want you to be clear about the skills and knowledge you should keep in mind when generating collaboration proposals. Among them, we highlight:

This chapter serves as a reminder that each proposal presented is another step towards creating a world where your objectives and goals are important, sometimes urgent, and where the clear intention is for you to forge alliances that will illuminate the path of your association with a more inclusive and hopeful vision. Seeking the achievement of your goals is the only way to grow.

Example of Letter to probe

LOGO
INFORMACIÓN

Subject: Advocating for Inclusive Education for Youth with Low Vision: An Invitation to Transformation

Dear [Name of Professional or Ministry or Individual],

I hope this message finds you well and motivated to continue driving significant changes in your field. I am reaching out to you because I share a vision with your institution (or with you if you are an entrepreneur in the education sector) of a future where education is truly inclusive and accessible for all.

My name is [XXXXX], and I represent the [XXXXX] association, which is committed to making a significant impact on the current educational landscape. And why is that? Allow me to explain. We are on a mission that inspires us: to provide young people with low vision the opportunity to access inclusive education that not only allows them to fully participate but also nurtures and unleashes their unique potential.

We understand and appreciate your ongoing commitment to improving the education system. We believe that by joining forces, we can catalyze a transformative change in how we approach the education of these extraordinary young people.

Inclusive education is more than just an aspiration; it is the foundation of a just and equitable society. For youth with low vision, the difference between passive participation and active leadership in the classroom often lies in accessibility and the right adaptive tools.

LOGO

We are seeking your support to implement innovative solutions that will transform classrooms into stimulating and barrier-free environments.

Imagine the impact we could achieve together: classrooms that not only embrace diversity but celebrate it; young people who not only receive education but grasp it with both hands, embracing new technologies and shaping them according to their dreams and aspirations, because, of course, this can benefit everyone, not just those with low vision.

We are ready to discuss how we can align our visions and work hand in hand to make this bold proposal a tangible reality. We are prepared to present our project to you in detail and explore concrete strategies for carrying out this much-needed educational transformation in our environment.

Your support would be more than just a collaboration; it would be a testament to your commitment to a future where every mind, regardless of visual ability, is a driving force for innovation and progress.

We sincerely appreciate your attention and eagerly look forward to the opportunity to have a meeting to work together and make a milestone in inclusive education.

Sincerely,



xxxx

Preparing the proposal

A well-crafted proposal clearly communicates the vision and objectives of a project. This helps to avoid misunderstandings and ensures that all parties involved have a precise understanding of what is sought to be achieved. It generates interest because it is persuasive, captures attention, and initiates initial commitment. It allows for the identification and articulation of common goals between the organization and its potential collaborators. Goal alignment is essential for building strong and lasting relationships.

It is important to demonstrate the viability and feasibility of the project. Details about the approach, methodology, and necessary resources provide confidence to collaborators about the possibility of success and lend seriousness to the objective. It's not about fishing to see what happens. Transparency allows for providing detailed information on how resources will be used and the potential challenges facing members of your association, creating a solid foundation for mutual trust.

For the proposal to be effective, include clear indicators to measure impact. This not only helps to evaluate success but also provides a framework for adjusting strategies as needed.

Careful elaboration highlights the unique characteristics of the project you aim to achieve by collaborating with them and the added value it brings. This distinguishes your proposal from others and emphasizes why it should be considered a valuable opportunity for them.

Provide sufficient and relevant information for collaborators to make informed decisions. This streamlines the decision-making process and prevents potential obstacles arising from a lack of clear information. This is why many proposals get forgotten. There's no time for feedback, you know, these institutions or individuals are super popular and receive collaboration proposals every day of the year.

Therefore, yours should emphasize how the project aligns with their values and mission. This factor is essential for building meaningful and sustainable long-term collaborations. The proposal should facilitate the mobilization of resources by providing collaborators with a clear understanding of what is needed and how their participation will contribute to the project's success. Communicate this clearly and concisely. In simplicity lies success, so don't overcomplicate it.

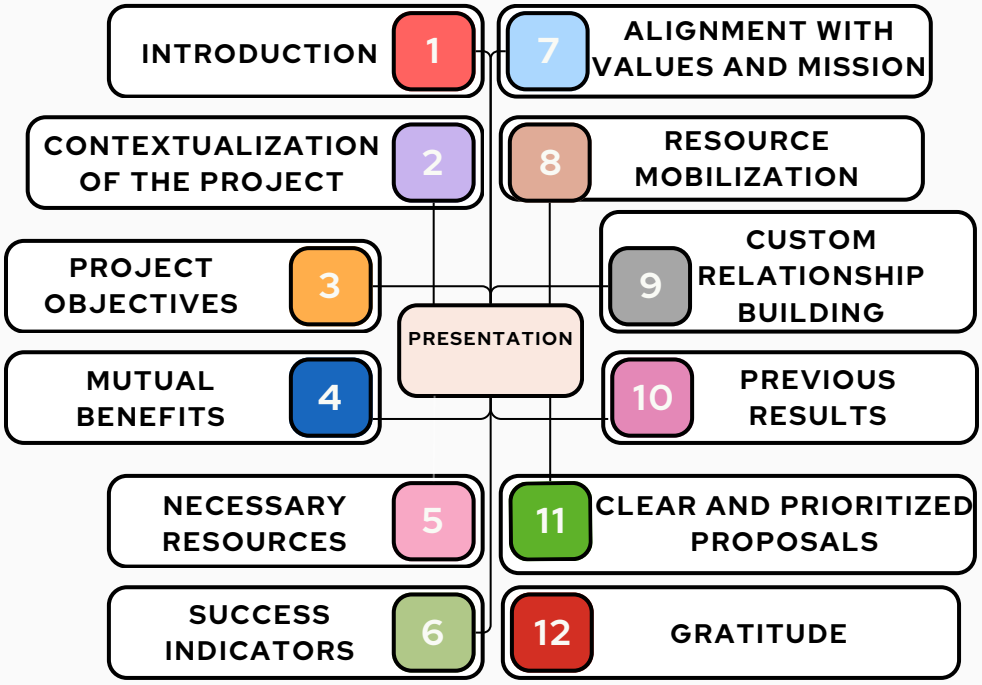


Let's see how it can then be presented with this example (it is just a suggestion, you must customize each example that appears in this manual):

Introduction: (It is important to clarify that we are pointing out the points that it should contain, but that in the letter you write, you should not put these titles in bold, it is only to make it easier for you to understand the elements that the communications should contain.)

We write to you sharing our vision of improving education for youth with low vision. We are XXXXX (name of the association) an organization committed to the well-being and comprehensive development of people with low vision.

Project Contextualization: In (country), we face the challenge of providing inclusive and tailored education to meet the needs of youth with low vision. This proposal aims to address this issue and create an educational environment that fosters their learning and active participation.



Project Objectives

- Adaptation of Educational Resources: Developing accessible educational materials that meet the specific needs of students with low vision, facilitating their participation and understanding.
- Teacher Training: Implementing training programs for teachers, providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to support students with low vision effectively in the classroom.

- Technological Inclusion: Introducing adaptive technologies and digital resources that enhance the learning experience of young people with low vision, facilitating their participation in digital educational environments.

Mutual Benefits: Your participation in this project will directly contribute to improving the quality of education for young people with low vision. You will be highlighted as a key advocate for inclusion and educational equity. The association and your institution (or your name in the case of being a recognized professional) will be acknowledged in all materials and events related to this initiative.

Necessary Resources: To achieve these objectives, we are seeking (specify the type of assistance required, such as funding, technology donation, training support, providing talks, providing training for donated equipment, etc.). The proposed investment will be used transparently and efficiently, demonstrating our commitment to the success of the project.

Indicators of success:

- Improvement in academic outcomes for students with low vision.
- Increased participation and retention of students in inclusive educational environments.
- Positive feedback from teachers and students on the implemented resources and programs.

Alignment with Values and Mission: This project reflects our shared values of inclusion, equity, and access to education for all. We believe in the ability of every individual to reach their full potential, regardless of their visual abilities, just as you have been doing in different places.

Mobilization of Resources: Your contribution will be crucial to the success of this project, enabling the mobilization of necessary resources to implement effective and sustainable initiatives in the educational field for members of our association.

Personalized Relationship Building: We understand the importance of building personalized relationships. We chose to approach you specifically because we recognize your commitment to (mention specific achievements or values that you have previously researched).

Previous Achievements: We have successfully accomplished (mention the impact achieved previously), serving as evidence of our ability to carry out successful initiatives and generate tangible results.

Clear and Prioritized Proposals: Let's focus initially on the objective of (here you should mention if you want training, resources, technology, and the value you are expecting to be granted), highlighting why your support is essential to achieve it. Subsequently, we will explore other objectives based on your interest and availability.

Finally, as we discussed in our meeting, this proposal represents a unique opportunity to make a significant difference in the education of young people with low vision in our city/country. We are eager to discuss how your collaboration can directly contribute to the success of this project. We are available for any inquiries or future meetings.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration and look forward with optimism to the beginning of this fruitful collaboration.

Sincerely, (Your name and role in the association)

We firmly believe that only through a relationship built on trust can companies and associations share the same vision of creating a stronger society where opportunities for development are also enhanced. These are just examples that we have outlined to show you how it can be written; you must give it personality and that necessary human touch for it to be taken into account.

The challenges faced by your members are challenges for all, and solutions will only come through collaboration and the joining of forces in pursuit of a common goal.

Businesses have gradually become aware that their immense power carries with it an enormous responsibility. Similarly, associations are realizing that they need to combine efforts with other stakeholders to achieve their goals.



It is becoming apparent that companies do not have the capacity to generate the impact they need on their own, so it is time to initiate collaborative processes, advocating for those with a clear and committed Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. These companies are more strategically focused and actively seeking projects for longer-term collaborations or partnerships that can enhance their reputation.

You, who are connected to international networks and have information at your fingertips, should align your missions with those of organizations and work towards a common goal, benefiting from collaboration.

Collaboration has three major stages (philanthropic, transactional, and integrative), but the relationship evolves simultaneously at different levels, not necessarily in the same way or at the same pace. These levels are related to the degree of commitment, the importance or alignment of the collaboration with the organizations' missions, the magnitude of resources allocated to the project, the type of resources and number of activities, interaction frequencies, trust, complexity, and strategic value of the collaboration (Austin, J. E. (2000): The Collaborative Challenge: How Nonprofit and Business Succeed through Strategic Alliances).



CHAPTER 5
RAISING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

“Don't think that money does everything, or you will end up doing everything for money.”

Voltaire

Fundraising plays a crucial role in the strengthening and sustainability of any association. It's important to clarify that this point should be just one item on the list you've set for yourselves. By doing so, you remove that feeling that it's impossible to raise funds or assistance to achieve your goals.

This chapter delves into effective strategies to garner the necessary support, addressing everything from formulating strategies to creating endowments and fundraising both internationally and locally. Additionally, we'll explore how to build financial bridges to the private sector and generate revenue through proprietary products and services.

5.1 Formulation of strategies to attract resources

The common goal of fundraising in support of the association's objectives should extend beyond fundraising activities. The selection among different strategies often results from experiences and consultations conducted by the association's board members.

Generally, the strategies are sufficiently simple and flexible to evolve and incorporate new actions over time. Agreement and participation from various stakeholders (board of directors, advisors, members, and collaborators) are typically sources of ideas that allow for the composition of one or several successful strategies.

What should be evaluated before starting?

The development of a clear notion of where to concentrate efforts depends on the ability to assess the environment. Among the partner associations of this project, most began by asking themselves the same questions:

- What are the essential resources to achieve our objectives and support our mission?
- What financial and time resources are already committed to the association?
- How much money and time are we willing to specifically invest in resource mobilization?
- What practices and values are rooted in collaborative, philanthropic, donation, or local project traditions, both at the individual and corporate levels?
- What are the current trends in international assistance, including official development assistance, foundation participation, private partnerships, and NGOs?
- How can we adapt to and capitalize on opportunities in this constantly evolving environment?
- Where can we access successful experiences and effective techniques in fundraising to improve our practices?
- How can laws and regulations governing the nonprofit sector affect our resource mobilization initiatives?

The question "What are our strengths?" applies to both new and established associations, which is why we recommend:

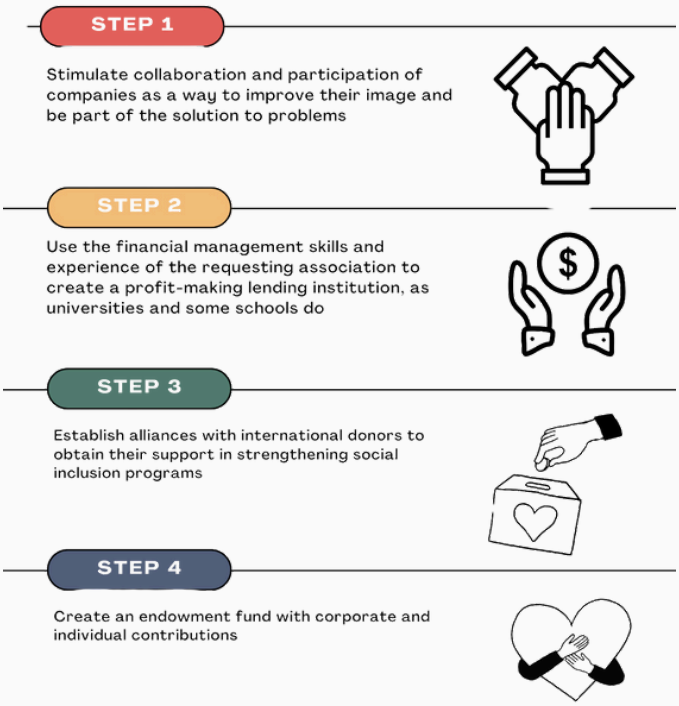
Conducting a **SWOT** analysis to formulate strategies that leverage your comparative advantages. By knowing your strengths, you can identify niches that can be leveraged through your relationships with individuals and organizations, with the aim of garnering support. Newly established organizations or associations must tread a longer path to build their reputation, and we want to be very clear about this. As you will understand now, we suggest supporting those already established by formulating a project that can be complementary to the activities and projects these associations already execute. It's not impossible, just time-consuming, and we have decided to be transparent with you.

So that you can have a voice in the spheres where large corporations and NGOs dedicated to leveraging resources for the third sector converge, we suggest that if possible, you do so with associations that have:

- Solid relationships with local communities and organizations
- Ability to engage with businesses and governments
- Aim to mobilize resources more broadly, or solely for themselves
- Access to endowments or other secure forms of funding
- Compelling missions and objectives that can be widely shared
- Accounting systems to ensure resources reach their destination



What are some of the strategies to raise resources?



It's easy to underestimate the time, resources, and skills required for fundraising, as well as for maintaining good communication and relationships with collaborators. Good strategies are needed to reduce costs associated with the activity and to pay special attention to building trust among potential collaborators.

Having a diversified base of resources can help avoid problems caused by the loss of a single source. There's a famous saying that warns against putting all your eggs in one basket. Similarly, relying on a single source of funding may provide significant income for a certain period, but its loss could cripple the association.

The success of projects is more linked to how resources are raised than to the amount of money raised to achieve an objective. The resources raised represent a growing commitment. Therefore, having a consistent track record, beneficiaries, and again, a good strategy, is essential for the association.

Associations gather resources for three main objectives: to finance their programs, their operations, and to build endowments. Resources are raised to use them for the impact they plan to make on their members and the community. In the long term, an endowment will ensure the sustainability of their initiatives.

5.2 Endowment funds

Endowment funds are permanent assets (money, securities, properties) that are invested to generate income. Trust funds, memorial trusts, endowments, and capital or asset bases are other terms used to refer to endowment funds. Depending on the cultural and legal context prevailing in your country, one or more of these terms may be commonly used.

An endowment fund can be created by the contribution of a single donor or by contributions from multiple donors. Or from its members.

A common way to build an endowment fund is by soliciting contributions from members of the community the association aims to serve. The association can be a vehicle for long-term social transformation and a mechanism for distributing, monitoring, and evaluating the contributions it may receive for different actions. With this, we provide information that may interest you in the long term to build one, which is why we are explaining it in a way that leaves the option open, as small associations often seek to benefit from these endowment funds, seeking collaborations that can fund or finance their initiatives.

In America and Europe, some associations have been created through contributions made by a single organization or government agency. The goal of this contribution is often to establish a sustainable source of resources for a specific cause or community.

We bring this up here as an option because you probably already know that companies with various fronts and forming corporations are increasingly interested in collaborating with associations with the aim of making a joint initiative more efficient than if the parts were developed separately.

Many nonprofit organizations are attracted to the idea of endowment funds because they offer financial sustainability and greater autonomy. Contributions to endowment funds, however, must compete with other immediate needs. When raising contributions, the foundation must justify why it needs a permanent source of income to have an impact on the issues it seeks to address. Ownership of an endowment fund gives an association a degree of independence, increases its long-term planning power, and provides more security about its ability to finance its initiatives.

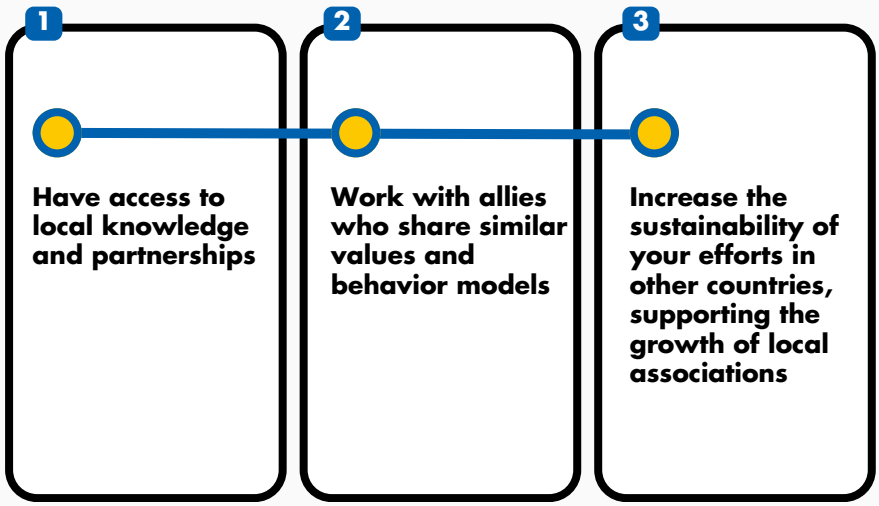
As we know, associations, by their nature, are often created precisely to raise resources for the general benefit of the community they serve. Managing endowment funds is much more than a financing strategy; it is the creation of this resource that allows them to effectively mobilize the development of new sources of funding and work with a variety of organizations within their area of action to address funding issues for their initiatives.

With an endowment fund in place, associations have an effective base of financial assets that can be invested in increasing their capacity to raise and manage funds to address evolving needs as they grow. Even as the community they aim to serve and benefit from becomes stronger, they will continue to benefit from having an institution that plays the role of administrator.

This strategy can be a means of maintaining and managing collective resources for the benefit of the members of their community. Ownership of these resources allows them to define their own priorities and puts them in a privileged position to attract additional funds and have a greater impact. As mentioned earlier, nowadays this is possible due to a significant increase in corporate contributions, with companies increasingly acting as patrons for associations, driven by the growing exercise of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

5.3 Attracting resources from international organizations

An international organization (private or public) can undoubtedly have several objectives that lead it to work with associations in other countries. Among the reasons we suppose:



An example of this is **ERASMUS+**, which is the European Union program designed to support education, training, youth, and sports in Europe. Erasmus+ has been created to facilitate the modernization of education and training systems, as well as to improve young people's access to the job market.

The fundamental pillars of the European Union are education, training, and youth. For the period 2021-2027, the program places great emphasis on social inclusion, ecological and digital transition, as well as fostering youth participation in democratic life. For this reason, you have this document in your hands. The partners of this project recognize the importance of including youth with low vision in these matters as a key strategy for the emergence of solutions that benefit more people with this condition in the world in the long term and not just sporadically.

Therefore, securing resources from international organizations for a newly created association can be a challenging but feasible process. Some organizations consider or even prefer receiving proposals that align with their announcements on their networks and websites. Others, however, do not consider providing resources for a proposal if there hasn't been significant prior contact.

We will try to outline an approximate approach to achieve this, step by step:

1. Identification of International Organizations
2. Developing a strong proposal
3. Proposal Customization
4. Compliance with Requirements
5. Participation in Fairs and Subsidy Calls
6. Collaboration with International Networks and Alliances
7. Demonstration of Measurable Impact
8. Awareness Campaigns
9. Participation in International Events
10. Follow-up and Thank You



-**Identification of International Organizations:** Lay the groundwork. Research and identify international organizations that have an interest or mandate in issues related to low vision, visual impairments, technology development for education, or inclusion. This could include UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international foundations, both private and public. The recommendation is direct contact or through third parties who have experience with these organizations. This will help initiate conversations and lay the groundwork for understanding. Then, discuss your objectives and provide context about your role in the community you represent. Demonstrate with facts and data (if available) your capacity and integrity.

-**Development of a Strong Proposal:** Create a solid and compelling case that highlights the importance of your association. Clearly and emotionally explain the situation of people with low vision, the challenges they face, and how your association's intervention can make a difference in your country or region.

-Customization of Proposals: Tailor your proposals to each international organization. Research the priorities, objectives, and specific focus areas of each entity to customize your request for resources or assistance. They all have websites with all the information on requirements; only send the documents exposed there and not additional ones because this helps you to be considered an organized entity, especially in the European Union, where a thorough selection process is required, and compliance with what they ask for is highly valued.

-**Compliance with Requirements:** Ensure compliance with all requirements and guidelines established by international organizations. This may include the submission of regular reports, alignment with the strategic objectives of the organization you want to collaborate with, having your accounts in order and justified, among others.

-**Participation in Fairs and Grant Calls:** Stay tuned to fairs and grant calls from international organizations. Many contacts are initiated during breaks or at networking tables, so do not underestimate them.

-**Collaboration with International Networks and Alliances:** Be part of international networks and alliances related to low vision and visual impairments. These connections can provide you with access to fundraising opportunities and help you develop collaborations.



-Demonstration of Measurable Impact: Develop clear and measurable indicators to demonstrate the impact of your association. International organizations are often interested in projects that can show early victories.

-**Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct international awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of low vision and generate public support. Nowadays, social media platforms do most of the work. Increased awareness can translate into more interest from international organizations, as they often have team members who review potential collaborations' social media presence.

-**Participation in International Events:** Participate in international events related to visual impairment and inclusion. These events provide opportunities to establish direct contacts with representatives of international organizations. Many of these events are held online, but most use English as the primary language.

-Follow-Up and Appreciation: Conduct effective follow-up before, during, and after receiving resources. Provide updates on the progress of your projects and express gratitude to international organizations for their support. Transparency and regular communication are key to maintaining long-term trust relationships.

Successful proposals focus on initiatives that align with the interests of international organizations. Keep in mind that different laws, customs, expectations, and policies may limit potential support from these organizations for international programs and the level of funding available for each country.

As you can see, many concepts are repeated because managing a successful relationship requires proficiency in at least the following areas: project planning and execution, financial management and accounting, and of course, the area that enables all of this, communications.

Support from international organizations can be directed towards your projects, the institutional development of your association, or towards endowment funds as discussed earlier.

5.4 Fundraising from Individuals

Promoting and fostering a culture of donations is a priority for the association, or at least it should be. Through this initiative, you can raise greater contributions and involve people in addressing your initiatives. Contributions from individuals can include not only money but also time, ideas, work, and political action.

Mobilizing resources from individuals is essential to achieving your goals. The outcome of engaging with people and making them aware of how they can collaborate with the association goes beyond the money that can be raised and used to promote the common good. The reasons why people donate are related to their individual personalities and can vary according to their cultural and economic contexts.

Reaching the public and providing them with the proper means to respond to your call and get involved are part of the challenge. The association holds the privileged position of being able to offer people the opportunity to participate more in solving the issues that concern them, channeling their funds towards valuable initiatives. You are offering people this opportunity to serve.

It's not about solely focusing your efforts on the economically powerful individuals in society.

We suggest taking into account the different types of donations and activities in which people can be involved to obtain them, thereby creating a network of contributors from diverse economic classes and professions.

As it's about seeking mutual benefit, the association can also be an attractive vehicle for receiving contributions since people are interested in ensuring their money is spent coherently and not diverted from its intended purposes. You attract support from people when you are accountable for the proper use of funds.

Another known factor that serves as a hook for fundraising from individuals is tax deductions, in cases where philanthropic activities are eligible for such benefits according to existing laws. This can also influence the decision of individual donors to contribute.

Typically, we know that people are committed to causes benefiting children, which clearly have a direct emotional appeal for many individuals. Others donate for a wide variety of reasons, depending on their personal commitments. These reasons include, but are not limited to, the environment, health, community development, education, sports, art, and culture.





The most used strategies currently to attract people resources are:

-Crowdfunding: This is the way to go, as there are several online platforms for fundraising (as we have seen several times in these documents), where impactful stories and specific goals can be shared. The advantage is that since it's online, people from anywhere in the world can get involved, so social media is your main ally to spread the word.

-Membership Programs: Offer membership programs to encourage regular contributions and establish a committed community.

5.5 Creation of a financial bridge to the private sector

Businesses are a fundamental part of society and do not operate in a vacuum. The profits and stability of a company are influenced by social, economic, and environmental factors that define the market and the context in which they operate.

The reasons why businesses engage with an association are as diverse as the businesses themselves. Some seek to link their donations with their business, while others have established independent associative projects that provide assistance. Generally, companies link their donations to the benefit of the communities where their headquarters are located. And now, with the strength and importance of CSR, where one of the pillars is the social aspect, due to lack of knowledge or research strategy, they end up giving these contributions to their employees, their families, or recognized foundations.

Businesses can provide more than just money; they can also offer administrative expertise, services, products, volunteers, counseling, and advertising. Now more than ever, they are looking for programs and projects in which they can contribute.

In this strategy to raise funds, the association can offer business leaders a panoramic view of the social impact they could achieve together. This provides you with concrete opportunities to act with the support of a recognized company. In other words, as an association, you can act as a bridge between companies and the communities you are trying to impact.

This is why the Guide is generated, because by creating associations or actively participating in them, you can implement this strategy to jointly solve problems and reinforce community initiatives. In the case of low vision, this can have an impact because by positioning yourselves as partners, you can benefit from working with indirect groups, such as associations that focus on rare diseases, collectives of blind people, or those that gather paralympic athletes.

The association can define its role as a bridge between the needs and interests of these communities and businesses. The relationship between companies and civil society is sometimes characterized by differences in objectives and the conflicts that arise from these differences.

You could position yourselves as partners or allies to manage projects. One way to start engaging with companies is by channeling different types of in-kind contributions (for example, computers or transportation) that benefit your members and communities that, for various reasons, have not legally constituted as associations but still need support. This way, you can even participate in marketing campaigns related to the cause and begin a journey where you will be recognized by a larger audience.

5.6 Generation of income through own products and services

It's not so common for associations to develop income-generating strategies beyond investing the main portion of their endowment funds or receiving funds from grants obtained from public or private entities or international NGOs.

This may be related to the legal landscape of some countries that discourages non-profit organizations from doing so. Another obstacle may be related to the lack of access to good opportunities to do so and the lack of business skills or strategic decision-making by the board of directors. However, it is increasingly recognized that revenue generated through the sale of products, services, training, or intellectual property can be a source of funds and can help expand the funding base for an association. Since profits from business activities are not tied to a particular program or donor wishes, this money can be used at the discretion of the foundation and therefore represents a very desirable income stream.

On the other hand, appropriate skills and talents are needed, as well as availability to dedicate oneself to what is essentially a full-time job. Additionally, the association must identify a significant niche in which it can be competitive. It must prepare so that what they decide to do to raise funds can stand out. It requires investing capital, time, and effort in its activities. Success is not guaranteed. It's a job of consistency and persistence.

It is essential to bear in mind that associations, in general, and in many countries, are providing services that public entities (which should be addressing them) are not. They work under great pressure and in an environment that changes constantly. What we recommend is to shape this strategy if they decide to use it to raise their own funds, in such a way that it truly becomes a way of operating that involves ongoing work. However, not all associations do this due to its fiscal implications, as it involves configuring how they finance themselves and how they train or educate the personnel dedicated to it.



Another aspect that can be an opportunity is that, in recent years, associations have increased their transnational activity due to the growing number of European funding programs that have been opened, promoting transnational cooperation, and the increasing number of entities interested in expanding their services to other countries. All of this arises as a result of the European recovery plan launched in the European Union in 2021, which extends until 2027 in its Multiannual Financial Framework.

These aspects can generate services that can be offered to both newly created national associations and those in countries where access to these resources is limited, and they can benefit from the fact that you can:

- Capitalize on the experience they have had.
- Capitalize on a specific niche such as educational topics, technological challenges, unemployed youth, among others.
- Provide a specific benefit or service to members or partners such as workshops, camps, conferences, more specific training, etc.

In some places, members can also contribute their expertise and can promote the association's ability to raise funds. Another obvious way to make money is to produce and sell a product.

CHAPTER 6
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

“Earn your reputation by striving to do difficult things well.”

Jeff Bezos, Fundador y Presidente de Amazon

Presenting projects to gather support from professionals or institutions, whether public or private, is a crucial task for the development and growth of associations and foundations. However, the true sustainability and effectiveness of these projects lie in the implementation of a good system for monitoring and evaluating the results obtained. Why? Because they allow for accurately measuring the real impact of the projects that you consider important. It's not just about the amount of funds raised, but about how those funds directly contribute to improving the quality of life for the members of your association. This not only supports transparency but also builds trust among donors, professionals supporting your cause, and the institutions with which you intend to collaborate or are already collaborating.

The needs of the association and the social dynamics within the country where they are located can change over time. For this reason, an effective monitoring system provides the necessary flexibility to adapt projects as new circumstances arise. This ensures that interventions are always relevant and effective.

Continuous evaluation helps identify areas where resources can be allocated more efficiently. When starting out, self-assessment is important because it leads to an understanding of which aspects of a project they have worked on are generating significant results and which ones could be improved. This optimizes the use of available resources, and we're not just talking about money but also about the people responsible for managing and executing them.





Tracking and evaluation not only focus on results but also on relationships. Yes, both internal and external relationships are equally important. Establishing bonds of trust and having a good team to undertake this challenging yet rewarding task of seeking help for the benefit of the association is as important as fostering them with potential collaborators, be they professionals or institutions you've reached out to. Providing regular reports to both collaborators and the Board of Directors and members of the association, and demonstrating how the contributions they have received are making a difference, strengthens long-term relationships. Institutions and professionals will want to continuously partner with projects that demonstrate sustainable and significant impact. And each member of the association will want to actively participate when they see the results and the impact generated internally.

Each project is a learning opportunity. It's like constantly entering and exiting a room, you never know what you might find. Continuous evaluation facilitates the identification of best practices and areas for improvement. This ongoing learning not only benefits the current project but is also carried over to future initiatives, enhancing the association's ability to effectively address the changing needs of the community. It helps individuals grow, mature, and obtain invaluable learning experiences. Gaining experience and making it an asset to the cause they pursue is a value that should not be overlooked.

A systematic approach to tracking and evaluation significantly contributes to the long-term sustainability of the association. It shows both public and private collaborators that the organization is proactive in ensuring that its projects are not only effective in the present but also prepared to face future challenges.

How to do it:

1. Establishing Clear Indicators: Before initiating any strategy to seek assistance, clearly identify key indicators that will help measure success. This could include the amount raised, the number of new collaborators, or the increase in awareness of the association.

2. Real-time Tracking: Use tools like Excel and technologies (if available) that allow real-time tracking of all activities carried out by individuals assigned to this task within the association, to avoid overlapping responsibilities, which is a red flag and can lead to conflicts. This provides flexibility to adjust strategies as needed.

3. Gathering Meaningful Data: Beyond financial figures, gather qualitative data that helps better understand the impact of your activities. Interviews with professionals willing to collaborate with you, testimonials, and surveys can provide valuable insights into the perception of your association.

4. Regular Evaluation: Schedule regular evaluations to review your progress and results. These evaluations should be opportunities to learn and adjust your strategies based on lessons learned.

5. Feedback from Collaborators: Actively seek feedback from your collaborators, both internal and external. This includes collaborators, volunteers, and beneficiaries. Direct feedback provides valuable insights into how you can improve. It's the attitude to adopt; don't take it personally, it's simply a viewpoint, and it's important to know and address it in a timely manner to avoid future misinterpretations and misunderstandings. The importance of serving lies in measuring the impact they are making. Being clear and sincere is fundamental.

6. Continuous Adaptation: Seeking assistance is a dynamic process. Be willing to adapt as your circumstances and the needs you want to address evolve. Flexibility is key to ongoing success.

7. Celebrate Successes and Learn from Challenges: Recognize and celebrate the successes achieved. Just as you review what doesn't go well, it's important to celebrate what goes well. At the same time, view challenges as opportunities to learn and improve. Each experience brings you closer to effectiveness in your strategies.

Implementing a solid tracking and evaluation system not only helps you measure success but also positions you for continuous growth as an association and as individuals. As you progress, remember that this process is a continuous journey of improvement and adaptation. The most important part of the journey is the company; don't forget that.

CONCLUSION

“If you can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl, but keep moving toward your goal.”

Martin Luther

Seeking assistance from professionals or public and private institutions, as we have seen in this document, is an interesting journey and, at the same time, a constant work, where the path to reaching the objectives is not defined; each objective is an adventure that you must be willing to undertake, and success will depend on what you want to achieve. You will also decide to take more or fewer risks, face unexpected ups and downs, and find immediate solutions to seize the opportunities that may arise.

For all this to make sense, you must truly connect with the reality that young people with low vision face in their daily lives and recognize that each one has a unique story. Each story is valuable and important. Listening to their experiences and challenges, empathizing with them, and becoming aware of the obstacles that have been normalized because there is no other choice, will allow you to use these stories to illustrate the specific needs that your association seeks to address and to gather support. Using testimonials and personal experiences to humanize the reality of living with low vision, combined with how much potential collaborators can relate to the people they are helping, will strengthen their connection to the cause.

The idea of this manual is to raise awareness among you about the importance of fostering a sense of community, emphasizing the importance of creating a space where all young people with low vision feel understood and supported. Emotional connection is key to motivating the participation and support of professionals and institutions, but also of the members of the association who feel that they are part of something much larger than just facing their difficulties alone.

Being involved in a community highlights the importance of active participation. A united community can generate invaluable resources and support. Everyone is mobilized by the achievement of the goals they have set out to reach. They will walk together when the path is not so smooth and there is not much light.

The recommendation is to make your stories for storytelling and elevator pitches more personal and relatable. Not fabricated. Sharing your own motivations for starting a project can be the answer to the question you must ask yourselves before starting: How has the reality of low vision personally affected you?

The authenticity of your stories can resonate deeply with those you are trying to engage, creating emotional connections and encouraging potential collaborators to emotionally connect with the cause. You can organize events where professionals and leaders of institutions can meet the young people who directly benefit from the association.

Do not be shy about inviting them to take concrete action. Be clear about what you need and how they can contribute. Provide tangible examples of how the support you receive will make a palpable difference in the lives of the young people the association represents.

We also emphasize the importance of showcasing the impact that your actions have on the members served by the association. Highlight success stories of young people who have been supported by the association. Nothing resonates more than seeing how concrete actions are positively changing lives.

When approaching professionals and institutions, tailor your message to highlight how the experience of that professional or the specific resources they want to have can be a valuable and unique contribution to the association; personalize your proposals. Another thing is that inviting potential collaborators to actively participate in programs or events that you organize can be a powerful persuasive tool.

Remember, empathy and authenticity are your best allies. Sharing your passion genuinely can inspire others to join, to collaborate. Best of luck with your association and with those projects you have to make a reality!

The stages that can be summarized below are just suggestions that, from the perspective of the partners of this project, can be presented.



Preparation

- Get to know the entities or individuals you want to collaborate with thoroughly.
- Align your mission, vision, strategy, and discourse with those of these entities.
- Define the projects you want to participate in.
- Have a clear objective for the collaboration.
- Define an approach policy to the institution or the professional.
- Present the collaboration project in a structured and attractive way.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis to analyze the possibilities of the relationship and/or collaboration.
- Achieve a mutually beneficial relationship.
- Make strategic planning for the collaboration.
- Establish an evaluation mechanism to enable tracking.
- Manage the expectations and requirements of the parties.
- Empathize with potential collaborators.



During

- Encourage active participation of the members responsible for these fundraising activities.
- Work on transparency, shared vision, and mutual understanding.
- Promote internal and external awareness.
- Refine elevator pitches and storytelling.
- Nurture relationships with potential professionals and entities (build loyalty).
- Build trust.
- Continuously evaluate and measure collaboration.
- Identify valid counterparts who use the same vocabulary.
- Ensure all necessary documents are available to meet requirements when seeking assistance from public or private entities (remember to make multiple copies and have them ready).
- Check that all requirements and documents are as requested by the public or private entity.

Finally

- Evaluate the results; assess the impact of successes and failures.
- Internal and external communication of the project's progress and evaluation.
- Celebrate achievements.
- Take stock of the collaboration and/or assistance.
- Be transparent and accountable.
- Maintain a smooth line of communication in the overall activities of the entities and/or professionals.
- Strategic reflection for future collaborations.

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