

Course: Corporate Communication and Public Relations

Lecture 2: Production of concept note for events and activities

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Objectives

By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Define a concept note.
2. Explain the use of a concept note at workplace.
3. Describe the components of a concept note.

Introduction

Nowadays, a workplace is dynamic, fast-paced, and challenging. To thrive in this environment, employees need to be equipped with the tools needed to excel at their job. One of those critical tools is professional writing skills. Professional writing skills are essential for a variety of roles in the workforce.

With writing skills, employees are able to produce various business documents to record various details regarding an organization's internal and external dealings, to exchange information within and outside of the organisation, etc. Among those documents, there is a concept note produced in line with different events, activities, projects, etc.

Definition

A concept note is the shorted expression a project idea given to a donor.

It provides an outline of the project one has in mind. It is the shortest possible text requested by a donor or an organisation/institution/company giving information on the project idea. In other words, it provides a framework of ideas which are seeking funds.

A concept note serves as a guide that makes things simple, clear, and easier to understand.

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In an organisation/institution, there are different projects, events, etc. worth to be implemented in line with the mandate of initiators yet means are limited.

Thus, an organisation needs to mobilize funds. Therefore, a concept note is produced and submitted to potential stakeholders and funders to solicit their support to implement a given project.

How long should a concept note be?

A concept note can be thought of as condensed possible text for a project idea. Thus, the shorter the better.

Usually, a concept note is 1-4 pages.

Purpose of a concept note

A concept note is usually used to first propose a project to a donor to get funds. Submitting a full application. From the donor's perspective, a concept note is to assess which ideas align with his/her priorities and are likely to be selected for the funding and eliminate the rest.

Concept notes are important because they help to identify potential stakeholders and funders for a proposed project. By providing a brief overview of the project, concept notes help to gauge interest and support. This is especially important when dealing with multiple potential stakeholders and funders, as it allows the organization to tailor their proposal to the interests of each party.

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Moreover, concept notes help organizations to save time and resources. Instead of preparing a full proposal for every potential stakeholder or funder, concept notes can be used to filter out those who are not interested in the project, allowing the organization to focus on those who are.

When to use a concept note

Concept notes are usually requested by potential stakeholders and funders before a full project proposal is submitted. They can also be used to introduce a new project to an organization or community. In addition, concept notes can be used as a tool for internal planning and decision-making.

For example, a company may use a concept note to introduce a new product or service to its employees before launching it to the public. This allows the company to gather feedback and make any necessary changes before investing resources into a full launch.

Parts of a concept note

A concept note is a concise document that outlines the main ideas and objectives of a proposed project, research study, or initiative. It serves as a preliminary proposal and is typically used to seek funding or approval for further development.

While the specific format and content of a concept note may vary depending on the context and requirements, it generally includes the following key parts:

1. Title
2. Introduction
3. Objectives
4. Scope and description
5. Expected results and outcomes
6. Target beneficiaries and participants
7. Activities and timeline
8. Budget and funding
9. Monitoring and evaluation
10. Sustainability
11. Risks and mitigation
12. Conclusion
13. Annexes (If applicable)

1. Title

The title succinctly describes the project or initiative and captures its main purpose or focus.

It helps the reader to have an idea of what is intended to be done, if interested he/she may go ahead and read the entire document.

2. Introduction

An introduction outlines the following parts:

- ✓ **Background:** Provide a brief overview of the context or problem that the project aims to address. Explain why the project is needed or relevant.
- ✓ **Rationale:** State the reasons for undertaking the project and the expected benefits or outcomes.

3. Objectives

This part highlights the following:

- **Overall Objective:** Describe the overarching goal or objective of the project, emphasizing the desired long-term impact.
- **Specific Objectives:** List the specific, measurable, and achievable objectives that the project aims to achieve.

4. Scope and Description

A scope and description are very important in clarifying intended project.

- **Scope of Work:** Define the boundaries and extent of the project, including what will be included and what will be excluded.
- **Methodology:** Provide an overview of the methods, approaches, or strategies that will be used to achieve the project's objectives.

5. Expected results and outcomes

- **Outputs:** Describe the tangible products, services, or deliverables that will be produced as a result of the project.
- **Outcomes:** Explain the anticipated changes or improvements that the project is expected to bring about in the target community or area.

6. Target beneficiaries or participants

This part of target beneficiaries or participants identifies and describes the individuals, groups, or communities who will directly benefit from or participate in the project.

7. Activities and timeline

- **Activity Plan:** Outline the key activities that will be carried out to achieve the project objectives. Provide a brief description of each activity.
- **Timeline:** Present a rough timeline or schedule indicating when each activity is expected to take place.

8. Budget and funding

- **Budget Summary:** Provide an estimate of the total project budget, including both expenses and expected funding sources.
- **Funding Needs:** Specify the amount of funding required for the project and any existing or potential funding partners or sources.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

- **Indicators:** Define the performance indicators and measures that will be used to assess the progress and success of the project.
- **Data Collection:** Describe the methods and tools that will be used to collect data and evaluate the project.
- **Reporting:** Explain how progress and results will be reported to stakeholders and donors.

10. Sustainability

A part of sustainability describes how the project will be sustained or continued beyond the initial implementation phase.

It deals with long-term impact and ongoing support.

11. Risks and mitigation

This part of risks and mitigation helps to identify potential risks or challenges that could affect the project's success and propose strategies for mitigating these risks.

It clarifies planned preventive measures to ensure an smooth implementation of a given project.

Conclusion

A conclusion summarizes the main points of the concept note, emphasizing the significance of the project and the expected benefits.

This part puts together the reasons of implementing a proposed project, what it will require and what is expected as results.

13. Annexes

Annexes, if applicable, provide any additional documents or materials that support the concept note, such as letters of support, organizational profiles, or relevant research findings.

Additional documents help a reader to dive deep into some details when necessary to understand well what the project is all about.

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It's important to tailor the content and format of the concept note to the specific requirements and guidelines of the funding agency or organization to which it is being submitted. Additionally, maintaining clarity, brevity, and a compelling rationale is essential to make the concept note stand out and capture the interest of potential sponsors or partners.

Steps for writing a concept note

Now that we have covered the key components of a concept note, it is time to take you through a step-by-step guide to writing a winning concept note.

A well written concept note explains well the project and may attract funds.

Step 1: Research and preparation

Before you start writing your concept note, it is important to conduct thorough research on the problem you are seeking to address, the target audience, and the available resources. This will help you to develop a comprehensive understanding of the project and its requirements.

Step 2: Develop a clear project objective

The project objective is the backbone of your concept note. It should be clear, concise, and specific. A well-defined objective will help you to stay focused on the project and ensure that the project is designed to achieve the intended outcomes.

Step 3: Provide a strong background and context

The background and context section of your concept note should provide a clear understanding of the problem the project intends to address and its relevance to the target audience and the broader community. This section should demonstrate the importance of the project and why it is needed.

Step 4: Identify your target audience and beneficiaries

The target audience and beneficiaries section of your concept note should clearly identify who the project is meant to benefit. This section should also provide details on how the project will improve the lives of the intended beneficiaries.

Step 5: Outline your project activities and methodology

The project activities and methodology section of your concept note should provide a detailed explanation of how the project will achieve its objectives. This section should outline the specific steps that will be taken to implement the project and achieve the desired outcomes.

Step 6: Describe expected outcomes and impact

The expected outcomes and impact section of your concept note should detail the expected results of the project and how they will contribute to the broader goals of the organization or community. This section should also provide a clear understanding of the impact the project is expected to have on the beneficiaries.

Step 7: Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan

The monitoring and evaluation plan should outline how the project will be monitored and evaluated to determine its success. This section should also include the indicators that will be used to measure the project's impact.

Step 8: Prepare a budget and identify resources

The budget and resources section of your concept note should provide a detailed breakdown of the costs associated with the project, as well as the resources required to implement it. This section should also include details on how the project will be funded.

By following these steps, you will be able to develop a comprehensive and winning concept note that will help you to secure funding for your project. Remember to keep your concept note clear, concise and focused on the project objectives. Good luck!

Features of a good concept note

Concise and Coherent

- A concept note covers all the key sections of a proposal, but in a concise manner. It has to contain clear language to explain more in fewer words.
- Many organizations give ready-to-use templates and/ or web forms for submitting concept notes and many of these templates have a strict word (and sometimes) even character limits.
- One has to be mindful of these aspects while working on a concept note. Typically, a concept note can be 2 to 4 pages long.

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Clear, interesting and action-oriented language

- The language is key to the quality of a concept note. Keep the language clear and action-oriented.
- Do not over-explain the statements, but avoid being vague.
- You can make use of the numbers and data from your records to make your case stronger and to show your NGO's expertise and experience in the field.
- Try to keep the title and section titles attention-grabbing and make sure you include some hooks in the language.

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Articulation of synergy

- Your research will inform the alignment of your proposed program with donor projects and funding priorities.
- Make sure this is reflected clearly and emphasized adequately in the concept note to convince a donor.

Dos

- ✓ Use clear and concise language
- ✓ Have a clear understanding of the funder's requirements
- ✓ Prioritize problem identification and solution methodology
- ✓ Customize and personalize the concept note
- ✓ Clearly demonstrate your team's capacity and capability to implement the project.

Don'ts

- ✓ Submit your proposal after the deadline
- ✓ Use jargon and technical terms
- ✓ Undermine or overstate the significance of the problem
- ✓ Submit a concept note without prior engagement with potential partners and stakeholders.

Remember the following in developing a concept note

- ✓ Don't swamp the reader with information.
- ✓ Think about your audience. The needs of various donors and financing organizations will vary.
- ✓ Find out as much as you can about the organization's goals, "hot subjects," and interests before sending the concept message.
- ✓ Keep your language in mind. Scientific jargon and technical phrases may be allowed if your idea paper will be evaluated by scientists in your field.

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- ✓ Only include budgetary information if it is specifically requested by the donor or reader.
- ✓ There is value in appearance. This idea paper is a reflection of you.
- ✓ Before submitting, make sure the spelling is correct. It's critical to pay attention to details.

Important considerations

In writing a concept note, there are things that you should keep in mind.

❖ **Choosing the appropriate format**

Choose the appropriate format based on the call requirements. Use a clear, concise, and professional format.

❖ **Timeframe**

Ensure that your concept note is submitted before the deadline. Provide sufficient time for review, editing, and feedback.

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❖ **Budget Constraints**

Ensure that the budget is feasible and within the funder's limitations.

When should you send a concept note?

- ✓ When requested
- ✓ To introduce yourself
- ✓ To test the water

What comes after a concept?

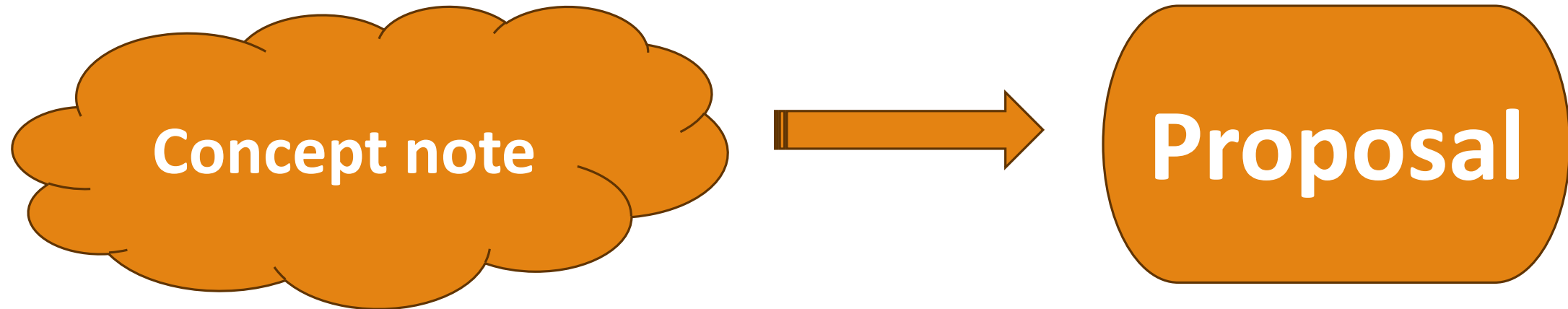


Image made by Protais Niyonshima

Presentation of a concept note

- ✓ A good presentation of a concept note is very important to attract funds. Therefore, it is important to proofread a concept note before submission.
- ✓ The content should be positive and definite. Donors will be more impressed if you sound as though you know where you are going and how you will get there.
- ✓ A document should be neat and presentable.

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- ✓ If you do not have a template to follow, make sure your document follows a clear and logical sequence.
- ✓ To avoid any ambiguity acronyms should be explained, and annexes for further details should be availed.
- ✓ Diagrams and figures should have captions.

Common mistakes to avoid

To ensure that your concept note attracts the attention of funders, avoid common mistakes such as:

❑ **Lack of clarity and precision**

Make your concept note clear and precise in its description of your project idea, methodology, and budget.

❑ **Including irrelevant information**

Ensure that your concept note does not contain unnecessary or irrelevant information. This can complicate the narrative and reduce the clarity of your message.

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❑ **Failure to meet the requirements of the call**

It is important to read and understand the funder's requirements. Failing to follow the guidelines and requirements may disqualify your concept note.

References

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Thank you!